

Rhythmic Rhapsodies



A GLIMPSE OF THE FOLK PERFORMING ARTS OF INDIA





Rhythmic Rhapsodies

A GLIMPSE OF THE FOLK PERFORMING ARTS OF INDIA

Compiled & Edited by
Gouri Basu

Rhythmic Rhapsodies

A Glimpse of the Folk Performing Arts of India

Compiled & Edited by:
Gouri Basu

Published by:
Eastern Zonal Cultural Centre
Kolkata
Second Edition: 2020
First Edition: 2008

© EZCC, 2020

Design, Layout & Printed in India by:
The Cybernetics
57 Rash Behari Avenue, Kolkata 700 026

Price: Rs.2,000



राज्यपाल, पश्चिम बंगाल
Governor of West Bengal

FOREWORD

Eastern Zonal Cultural Centre (EZCC) vigorous efforts in promoting and showcasing the culture of East India in the zone and other parts of India are bearing fruits. EZCC events exemplify and showcase talent. An opportunity is afforded to established and budding artistes to fully exploit their potential and exhibit their talent.

“Rhythmic Rhapsodies – Folk Performing Arts of India” provides a very attractive and useful glimpse into hundreds of variegated dance forms of various parts of India based on our ancient culture and folk traditions of communities. The book will be useful also as a source material.

Commitment and inspiring efforts of Smt. Gouri Basu, Director, EZCC, and staff of the EZCC need to be applauded for their directional approach and commitment.

This book will surely generate interest among readers and enrich them about cultural heritage, especially in folk dances and performing arts.

JAGDEEP DHANKHAR
Governor & Chairman,
Eastern Zonal Cultural Centre

25 August, 2020.

Acknowledgements

A compilation of this sort is not possible without the help of the folk artistes who we have been constantly meeting at different platforms over the last 30 years. They have taught us about the real India and invited us into their lives. We have not just met the performers, but often their extended families too, and this has given us a better insight into their lives and traditions. Many of them are probably not even aware of their contribution towards this compilation, but it has been in conversation with them that we have learnt a lot about their thoughts, hopes and aspirations.

We would like to thank the many experts in the field who have answered our many questions.

We would like to thank Goutam Mazumder and Tapas Kumar Samantaray for carefully going through the manuscript.

We express our gratitude to the Zonal Cultural Centres, for promptly responding to our requests for a few pictures from their archives.

Preface

Rhythmic Rhapsodies – A Glimpse of the Folk Performing Arts of India, is EZCC's contribution to the world of performing arts, done by us during the first 21-day phase of the lockdown due to the Covid-19 Pandemic. While all of us were working from home, which is difficult considering the nature of our work of promoting and showcasing the folk culture of our great country, we had to think of innovative ideas to keep our art forms alive and artistes motivated. We have been doing several online programmes like Baul Utsav, Gotipua Festival, Sattriya Dance Festival, Lok Nritya Utsav etc., trying to keep up the morale of our artistes, whose lives revolve around their performances. We found that young people who were relatively free during this period were enjoying the video clippings of our artistes performing in their rural surroundings rather than on sophisticated proscenium stages. Many of them wrote to us. This gave us the idea that we could give the younger generation more exposure to the diverse traditions of our vast country.

Also, watching teachers on our television screens struggling with something they were doing for the first time, online teaching, we thought we too should play a role in educating our younger generations on the performing and visual arts of our country. EZCC has in the past documented in detail the folk dances, folk musical instruments, visual arts and handicrafts of its member states. This time we decided to broaden the scope and demonstrate how the plurality of language and culture in India have made a united national fabric. We chose 5-7 of the popular performing arts of each state/Union Territory of the country and have presented it in a Coffee Table Book format to make it interesting and exciting for our youth. The performing arts are a reflection of the life and culture of the people. The small representation in this book is just a miniscule part of our rich cultural heritage. The digitised version of the book will be available on our website and the print version will be sent to schools and colleges across the country, with a request to keep it in their libraries.

Content

Ladakh	9	Kerala	117
Jammu and Kashmir	13	Puducherry	123
Himachal Pradesh	19	Tamil Nadu	127
Uttarakhand	23	Lakshadweep	133
Punjab	27	Andaman and Nicobar Islands	135
Haryana	35	Bihar	139
Uttar Pradesh	39	Jharkhand	145
Rajasthan	45	Odisha	151
Gujarat	53	West Bengal	161
Dadra and Nagar Haveli	63	Arunachal Pradesh	169
Daman and Diu	67	Assam	177
Goa	71	Manipur	193
Maharashtra	81	Meghalaya	201
Madhya Pradesh	87	Mizoram	209
Chhattisgarh	93	Nagaland	219
Andhra Pradesh	99	Sikkim	235
Telengana	105	Tripura	243
Karnataka	111		



Ladakh



JABRO

Jabro is a community dance performed by the *Changpa* tribe of nomadic people of Tibetan origin, living in the hills of the Changtheng area of Ladakh, during all festive occasions, particularly during *Losar*, the Tibetan new year celebrations.

The *Changpa* tribe has been living in the Changtheng plateau, on the south east of Leh town, from ancient times. At the height of 12000 – 14000 feet, the *Changpas* rear sheep, goats and yaks. They frequently move in search of fresh pastures for their livestock. Because of

the extreme cold in the region, the dancers wear heavy gowns made of sheep skin, caps made from lamb skin and long leather shoes. The performers, men and women, young and old, stand in two semi-circular rows, facing each other, and dance gracefully with slow gentle movements and intermittently stamp their feet with gusto to the rhythm of the music. In a usual performance, twenty-one dancers participate. The dance is performed to the accompaniment of *Jabro* songs, the theme of which varies from religion to romance. The religious songs are in praise of gods, monks and





FLOWER DANCE (MANTOK SHANMO)

Spring is a season for celebration, for colour. The *Mantok Shanmo* or Flower dance is the traditional dance of the inhabitants of Nubhra valley

gomphas. Sometimes the dance continues for several hours, occasionally through the entire night. The main musical instruments accompanying the dance are the *Damien*, a stringed guitar-like instrument similar to the flute and the *Damman*, a traditional drum. The dance is not just a celebratory performance. It also imparts moral and ethical lessons through the lyrics of the songs.

of Ladakh. The first flower of spring is offered to the Almighty and the second to one's beloved. Enchanted by the fragrance of the blossoms of spring and captivated by the beauty of nature, the young men and women, attired in colourful traditional costume, dance with graceful movements to the rhythmic accompaniment of the beats of the *Damman* and *Surna* and the haunting melodies of the *Shehnai*. Amidst the mesmerizing scenic beauty, the graceful



movements of the dancers bring hope to the people.

LADAKHI GHAZAL DANCE

Ladakh has a great treasure of enchanting music and dance that beckons art lovers from all over the world.



A *ghazal* is a form of amatory poem or ode, which has its origins in Arabic poetry. It is an expression of both the pain of loss or separation and the beauty of love in it. *Ghazals* came to South Asia in the 12th century due to the influence of *Sufi* mystics and the courts of the new Islamic Sultanate.

A popular *Ladakhi Ghazal* dance is based on the story of a queen from the village *Hundal*, situated in Nubra Valley of Leh. After her marriage she goes to her

husband's home in *Khaplu* village. At her new home she misses her family, relatives and friends of her own village and remembers them through her song and dance. This *Ghazal* dance is the story of the queen of *Hundal*.



Jammu and Kashmir

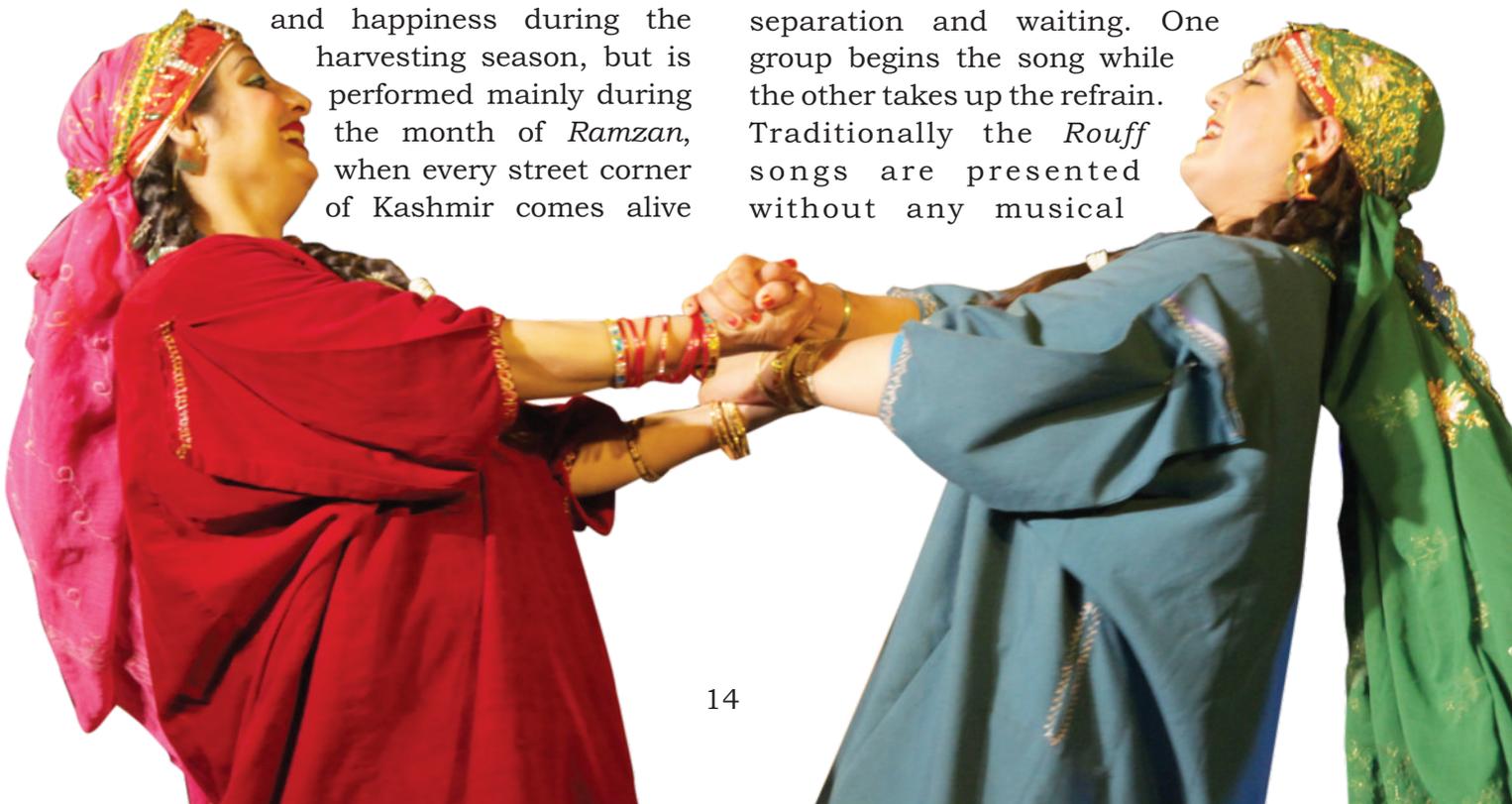


ROUFF

Kashmir is like a beautiful diamond set on the map of India. Perfection beyond this world makes the state a paradise – and this perfection is also seen in the enchanting music and dances of the region. *Rouff* is a very popular dance of Kashmir valley, performed by women.

The dance is an expression of joy and happiness during the harvesting season, but is performed mainly during the month of *Ramzan*, when every street corner of Kashmir comes alive

with *Rouff* songs and dances. Wearing colourful Kashmiri *phirans* and the traditional *kasaba* headgear, the women form two rows facing each other. Putting their arms around each others' waists they create beautiful rhythms and weave patterns with swaying and swinging movements. The dance is always accompanied by *Rouff* songs which have a variety of themes based on love, separation and waiting. One group begins the song while the other takes up the refrain. Traditionally the *Rouff* songs are presented without any musical





accompaniment, when they are performed at street corners or while doing daily chores. For stage presentations and performances at social gatherings, traditional folk instruments like the *Noot*, *Tumbaknari* and *Rabab* accompany the songs.

DHAMALI

The *Dhamali* is a devotional dance, performed by the men belonging to the *Wattal* tribe of Kashmir, to invoke the blessings of the gods. The dance is



performed on all ceremonial occasions but is mostly performed by pilgrims as they set out for the Islamic shrine of *Ziarat*. The dancers are led into the arena by the flag bearer who fixes the flag pole to the ground. The dance is performed in circular movements around the flag pole. The dance begins with slow movements and then graduates to whirls, jumps and twisting movements of the torso. In this highly energetic dance, the pilgrims seek God's direction and love. The dancers wear colourful traditional costumes comprising salwars and long tunic-like shirts complemented with jackets. Turbans are tied on the *Kullah* caps worn on the head.

An interesting variation of the *Dhamali* dance is the *Ras Dhamali*, in which the dancers perform martial art moves and have mock fights with sticks which they hold in their hands.

The musical accompaniment is provided by big drums and cymbals that bring the rhythmic element into the dance.



the bride's mother or grandmother. She sits at the centre and the young girls wash her feet with milk water and sing and dance around her. The accompanying musical instruments are the *Dholak* and *Harmonium*.

BHAND PATHER

JAGRANA

The *Jagrana* dance is a lively dance of the *Dogri* community associated with wedding ceremonies. The dance is performed by the women of the bridegroom's family after he ceremonially leaves for the bride's house with the male family members. While the women wait for the new bride to come home, they have an exclusive and uninhibited evening of music and dance. The women of the neighbourhood are also invited to join in the *Jagrana*. Wearing colourful and dazzling wedding attire embossed with *Gota Kinari* and ornate jewellery, the dancers sing songs of love and separation. A commonly enacted scene is to make an elderly relative of the family take on the role of

Bhand Pather is a traditional folk theatre form of Kashmir valley, organized mainly during fairs and *Ziarats*



held in honour of Sufi saints. However, it can be staged anytime, anywhere. *Bhand* means an actor or performer and *Pather* means a play or drama. This form of folk drama analyses the social, political,





Kalam, which has its own ragas known as *Muquam*. In this dance the roles of women characters are played by men. The lead dancer is known as the *Hafiza*. *Santoor* is the main accompanying instrument. The dance is a statement in communal harmony, as the major religious communities of the state dance together with happiness and joy.

religious and economic mistakes of society. Even the king and clergy are not spared in this satirical presentation. Often there is no fixed theme and the actors improvise depending on the situation and place of performance. The rhythm of the *Dhol*, *Surnai* and *Nagaras* enhances the dramatic element of the performance.

HAFEEZ NAGMA

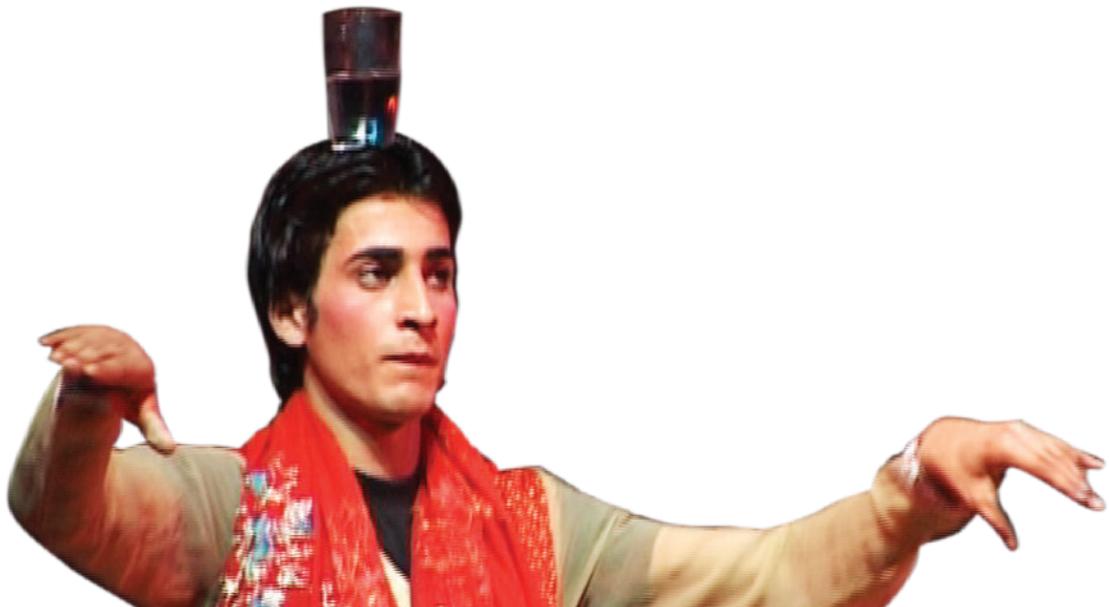
The *Moghuls* called Kashmir 'Paradise on Earth', which it truly is. It is the land of *Sufis* and saints, sparkling rivers and serene lakes. *Hafeez Nagma* is a traditional dance of Kashmir valley that began during the time of the *Moghul Badshas*. The dance is based on the classical music of the state, the *Sufiana*

KUD

Jammu is the first floor of the three-storey wonder of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh. *Kud* is a ritualistic dance, performed by the inhabitants of the



middle mountain ranges of Jammu. During the monsoons, when maize is harvested, the villagers gather in the



vicinity of the place of worship of the *Gram Devata*, the local deity, which becomes the venue for night-long festivities. Men and women, attired in their festive best – men wearing *churidar pyjamas* with loose shirts, turbans and waistcoats and women wearing *suthano* and heavily embellished *kurtas* – dance around a bonfire. Often, the children, too, participate in the celebrations, though traditionally it is an all male dance, performed by the hill farmers. Through the performance of this thanksgiving dance, the villagers

express their gratitude to the *Gram Devata* for protecting their children, cattle and crops from disease and natural calamities. The performance begins with the traditional musicians playing the *Narsingha*, *Bansuri*, *Talli* and *Dhauns*, entering first, followed by the dancers in a single file. A characteristic of all folk dances, spontaneity is also a feature of this community dance. As the dance proceeds, the dancers weave various patterns, making this show of community devotion a visual delight.





Himachal Pradesh

Nati dances are performed in varying styles all over Himachal Pradesh.



important dance of the *Kinnauris* is the *Losar Shona Chuksam*, which takes its name from *Losai*, meaning new year, and is performed to welcome the *Losar* New Year. Through the dance, the dancers depict the entire agricultural process from sowing to harvesting of *ogla* (barley) and *phaphar* (a local grain). The movements are slow with soft knee dips and accentuation of the torso. The dancers, led by the *Dhure*, who holds a *chaur* in the right hand, enter the performing area in a single file and weave various rhythmic patterns. The costumes worn by the dancers are mainly woolen.

KINNAURI NATI

Music and dance is in the blood of the *Kinnauris*. Nature is their biggest inspiration. The music echoes the music of the wind blowing through the forest, and the dance movements are a response to the natural world around them. An

The men wear a *pyjama* and long shirt. The women drape *pattus* or woolen shawls as skirts and wear an upper garment called *gachi*. Men and women both wear typical *Kinnauri* caps. The women wear heavy silver jewellery and the ornament worn on the forehead covers the eyes and half of the face. The



musical accompaniment is provided by the big *Dhol*, bronze cymbals called the *Bugjal*, the long wind pipe or *Karnal* and the *Ransingha*.

KULLU NATI

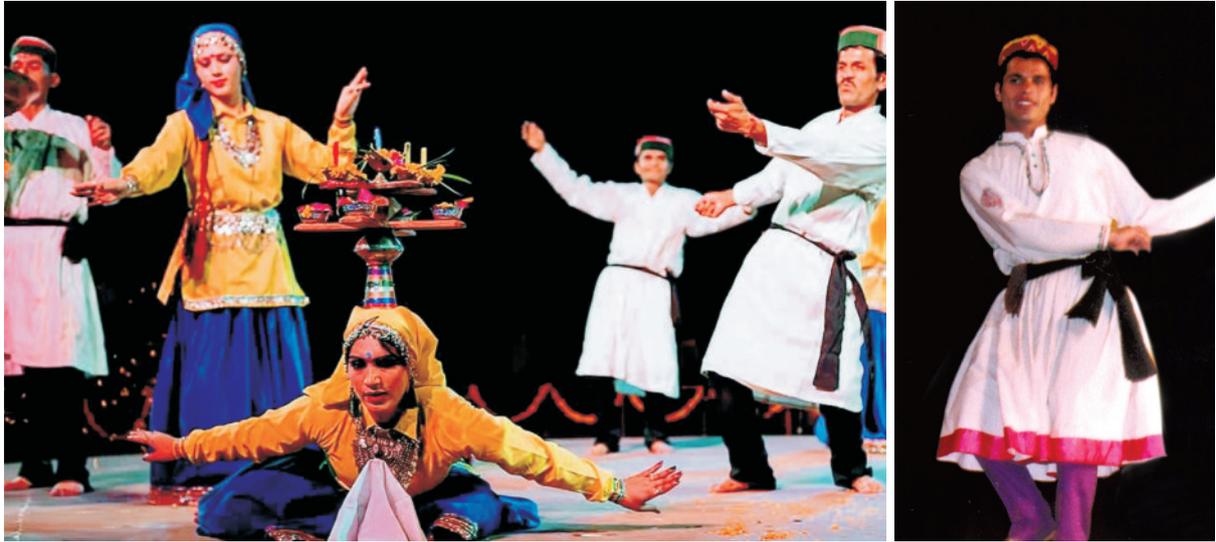


One of the most popular dances of the Kullu region of Himachal Pradesh, the *Kullu Nati* is performed at fairs and festivals. On special occasions, like *Dusserah*, the villagers bring their *Gram Devatas* or village deities on bedecked palanquins, to Kullu, from across the valley, in colourful processions. Singing and performing the *Kullu Nati* is an important part of this procession. The dancers are attired in traditional costumes – men wear white *churidar-pyjamas*, white woollen cholas, brightly coloured *patkas* around their waists and garlands around their necks – the women wear *kurtis* and *pattus*, which are woollen shawls, wrapped around like a skirt, and heavy silver jewellery. Both

men and women wear caps or scarves. The music accompaniment is provided by the *Narsingha*, *Karnal*, *Shehnai*, *Dhol* and *Nagara*. The movements are supple and gliding, and the dancers form geometrical patterns called *mala-nati*.

SIRMOURI NATI

The *Sirmouri Nati* is the most famous dance of *Sirmour* region, traditionally performed near the precincts of temples by both men and women. The dance is also performed at fairs and festivals, social gatherings and religious functions, to propitiate the local deity. Attired in traditional costumes, the dancers enter the performing area in a single file – the men and women separately. Moving around in circles, rotating in curves and serpentine patterns, the dancers form a semi-circle, a full circle and interlocking patterns. The musical accompaniment is



provided by the *Ransingha*, *Karnal*, *Hudak*, *Shehnai*, *Dhol*, *Nagara* etc. The women wear bright *ghagras* with short *kurtis* and a scarf to cover their head, while the men wear *pyjamas* with long shirts and caps. In the villages, anyone can join the performance spontaneously.

GADDINATTI

The *Gaddis* are the most colourful tribe of *Chamba* and their dance delves into the intricacies of domestic life. The men wear the white woollen *chola*, a frock-like cloak, secured around the waist with many yards of woollen sashes. They wear a high-peaked cap, which is pulled down over the ears during the severe winters. The women wear *ghagras*, *kurtis* and bright *dupattas*. The accompanying



songs, sung in poignant notes, describe domestic life and chores and friendly quarrels of new brides with their young brothers-in-law.

LAHAULI DANCE

The *Lahauli* dance of Lahaul valley, performed exclusively by women, has striking affinity with the dances of Ladakh valley. However, the songs and movements of this dance form are specifically *Lahauli*. The dancers wear rust and brown coloured gowns embroidered at the borders, which reflect the sandy stretches of Lahaul valley. Holding hands, the dancers move in a circular fashion in simple steps. The women wear jewellery made of beads and stones, thus stepping up the desert charm. Strains of the *Surna* and *Damman* provide the musical accompaniment.





Uttarakhand



JHUMELO

Through the *Jhumelo* dance the young married women of the *Garhwali* community, remember the carefree days spent at their parental homes. Married in a village far away from their childhood homes, the girls become nostalgic, and remember the delightful days spent with parents, brothers and sisters. While working in the fields, the young *Garhwali*

women put their hands on each others' shoulders, as they sway and sing, and share their common sorrow of being far away from their loved ones.

CHHAPELI DANCE

The *Chhapeli* dance is a social dance of the Kumaon region of Uttarakhand. This romantic dance is performed during fairs



and on festive occasions. In this romantic dance, the men and women move in pairs. The women hold a mirror in one hand and a silk handkerchief in the other. The men play the drums and wave silk handkerchiefs. The men supplement the dance movements of the women.

TAANDI DANCE

The *Taandi* dance is a traditional social dance of the Jaunsar Bavar region in Uttaranchal. In this dance, the young married couples express the joys and sorrows of nuptial life. Wearing traditional costumes – the men attired in *kurta* and *pajama* with a band around the waist - the women in *lehengas* and *kurtis* - make use of the satire and humour in the accompanying songs. The men hold a sharp instrument in one hand and a stick in the other. The women hold a sword in their hands. The delightful performance is accompanied by the *Dhol*, *Damau* and *Ransingha*.

HARUL DANCE

Harul is the traditional dance of the *Jaunsari* tribe of Jaunsar Bavar. This ritualistic dance is performed in honour of the valiant *Pandavas*. The theme of the dance is based on legends taken from the *Mahabharata* about the *Pandavas*. The dance blends the themes of valour and romance and is performed at weddings and all festive occasions. Holding hands, the men and women move forward,

backwards and sideways, to the tune of the *Turahi*, *Daman*, *Khanjari*, *Dhaak*, *Munda*, *Dhol* and *Ransingha*.

GHASIYARI DANCE

A folk dance of the Garhwali agricultural community, performed by women, attired in the traditional *ghagra*, blouse and waistcoat. The dance is performed as an ode to their daily routine, while clearing the grass on the way to their fields to harvest the crops.

THADIYA

The *Thadiya* dance of Garhwal, in Uttarakhand, is performed in the *thadiya* or open courtyard by the women on joyous occasions and during moments of leisure, when they return to their parental homes for a short break. The dance is also performed to welcome the season of fertility and fecundity, spring. The dance is performed in





circular formations. The accompanying songs begin with religious themes, but gradually shift to love and romance.

CHAUFULA

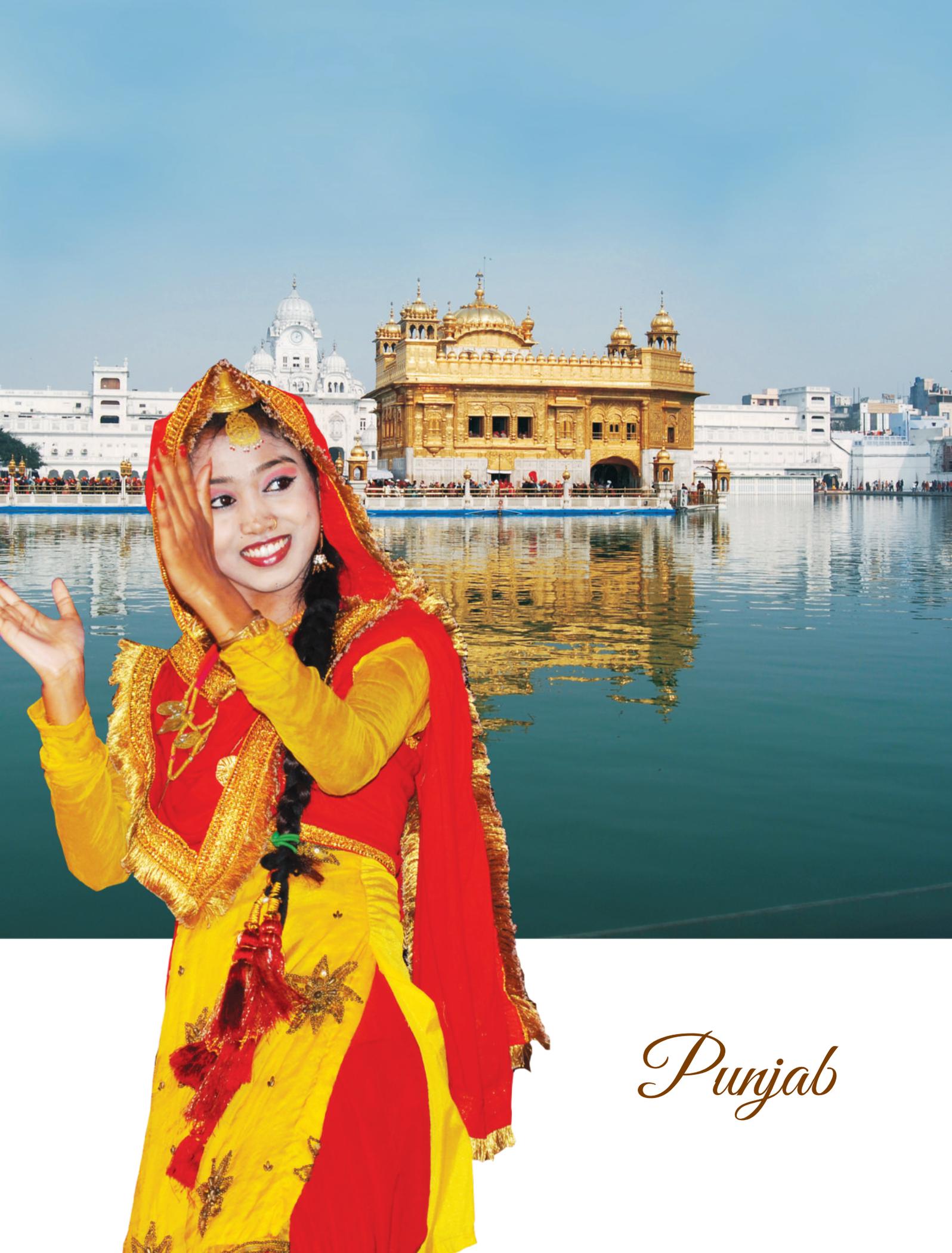
The *Chaufla* dance is a traditional dance of the Garhwal region, performed by both men and women. *Chaufla* means blossoming of flowers –as seen in spring. This dance is performed to welcome spring, the queen of seasons. Two groups perform simultaneously – the dancers of one group keeping their hands on their partners’ shoulders, swaying and singing to the rhythmic dance steps – the other group forms circles and dances with short forward and backward steps. The dance is a depiction of happiness and beauty. Men and women face each other and tap their feet to the rhythm of claps, creating in the process a unique symphony



without instruments, and a visual treat with graceful movements.

DEEPAK THALI DANCE

The *Deepak Thali* dance, a devotional dance, is performed with much reverence by the *Garhwali* people of the Jaunsar Bavar region of the state. The dancers hold a brass plate or *thali* with lighted lamps or *deepaks* on it and dance to the accompaniment of devotional songs, in the temples or at socio-religious occasions. The dancers try several innovations – some try to rotate the *thali* on the finger, and some try to balance it on the head.



Punjab



BHANGRA

From the land of the five rivers comes the *Bhangra*– the dance of life. The energy, verve and vivacity of this dance form aptly portray the resilience and martial spirit of the people of Punjab. The *Bhangra* is a centre-stage activity for all festivities of the *Sikh* community. The dance is associated with fairs, festivals, wedding ceremonies and the expression of joy after a bountiful harvest. The



Bhangra season starts with the sowing of wheat – from then, on every full-moon night young men in every village come to the open fields and dance for hours. The season concludes with the *Baisakhi* fair when the wheat is harvested. It is a time for rejoicing and the

Bhangra is a spontaneous expression of genuine happiness. The dancers are dressed in resplendent and bright costumes, comprising *tehmat*, and plumed turbans. The dance is

accompanied by the singing of *bolis*, which represent folk poetry at its best. Starting slowly, dancers perform a large number of movements, mostly with raised hands, and the tempo rises gradually, until dance and music merge into frenzied ecstasy.

A host of stunts, bordering on artistic agility and physical ingenuity, have been incorporated into the dance. The dance is accompanied by the beats of the *Dhol*, played by the *Dholi*. In addition, the *Chimta*, *Algoza* and earthen vessels are also used. The popularity of the *Bhangra* has crossed the borders of Punjab.



GIDDHA

Giddha is the popular dance of the women of Punjab, performed at weddings, the birth of a child, the *Teej* festival and all other happy occasions. The dance is highly energetic, but at the



same time displays feminine grace and elegance. The girls mostly dance in pairs. The dancers perform in a circular formation and take turns to come centre stage to enact *bolis*—the subject matter of the *bolis* is wide ranging – themes from nature, love affairs, loneliness of a new bride separated from her husband, arguments between sisters-in-law, excesses committed by the husband and his family, satires on political affairs figure in the *bolis*. The dance also incorporates real life village scenes, like women spinning cotton, grinding, fetching water from the well, etc. This is accompanied by appropriate *bolis* and songs. The refrain is sung three to four times, and then the performers withdraw, to be replaced by a new pair and a new *boli*. The distinctive hand clapping of the

dancers is an important feature of this dance form. *Giddha* is not performed to any set rules or sequences. It is spontaneous, creative and stylistically simple. One participant sings the *boli* and when the penultimate line of the *boli* is reached, the tempo of the song rises and all start dancing together in gay abandon -- thus *bolis* alternate with dance. The strikingly beautiful Punjabi women wear the traditional *salwar*





kameez or *lehenga* with elaborate jewellery. Mimicry and humour is also very popular in *Giddha* – one may play the role of an aged bridegroom and the other his very young wife – or one may enact the role of an overbearing and quarrelsome sister-in-law and the other a docile bride. The accompanying musical instruments are the *Dholak* and the *Gharah* or earthen pot. The presentation creates an enchanting atmosphere.

how much they mean to each other. Punjab has a rich heritage of romantic songs and some of them are used in the *Jindua* dance – love and music merge to create an atmosphere of fairytale romance. Commonalities with the *Bhangra* are the raised hands, rhythm

JINDUA

Punjab is about fun-loving people, colourful costumes and enthusiastic dances. *Jindua* is a popular dance performed commonly in group gatherings. *Jindua* means ‘the love of my life’ and the man and woman address each other as *Jindua*. The dance is performed in pairs and through the songs the man and woman tell each other how strong their bond of love is and





and bright costumes. There is much positivity all around when the *Jindua* is performed.

SAMMI DANCE

A fairy dancer, in the court of Lord *Indra*, by the name of *Sammi*, is believed to have taught this dance to the girls on earth. This dance is the only folk dance of Punjab initially performed by the women in Sandalbar region, which is now in Pakistan. The dance is performed by the women of the *Baazigar*, *Rai Sikh*, *Lobana* and *Sansi* tribal communities. The dancers stand in a circle and swing their hands, bringing them up from the sides to the chest level and clap. They take their hands down according to a rhythm and clap again. They repeat the movement by bending forward. Like the *Giddha*, this dance too is presented in circular

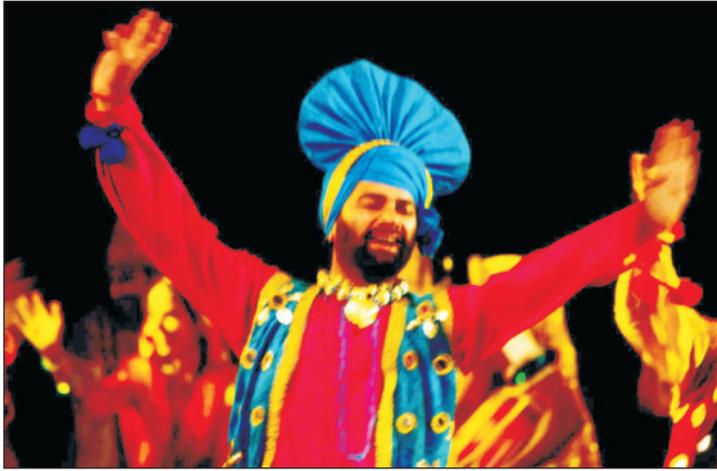


formation. Most of the gestures of this dance are restricted to the swinging of arms and clapping of hands. The dance is also connected to the legend of *Dhola-Maru*, a love story brought to Punjab by the migrants from Rajasthan. There is no musical accompaniment other than the drum, and the rhythm is provided by the stamping of the feet and the clapping. The songs reflect tender human emotions, happiness and sorrows of everyday life. The girls style their hair in thin braids over the head and tie the remaining length of hair in one long plait. An inverted lotus-shaped ornament called the *phul-chowk* or *suggiphul*

adorns their heads. They wear the *tehmat* or *lehenga* and *kurta* and cover their heads with a thick rectangular cloth, called *bhochhan*.

MALWAI GIDDHA

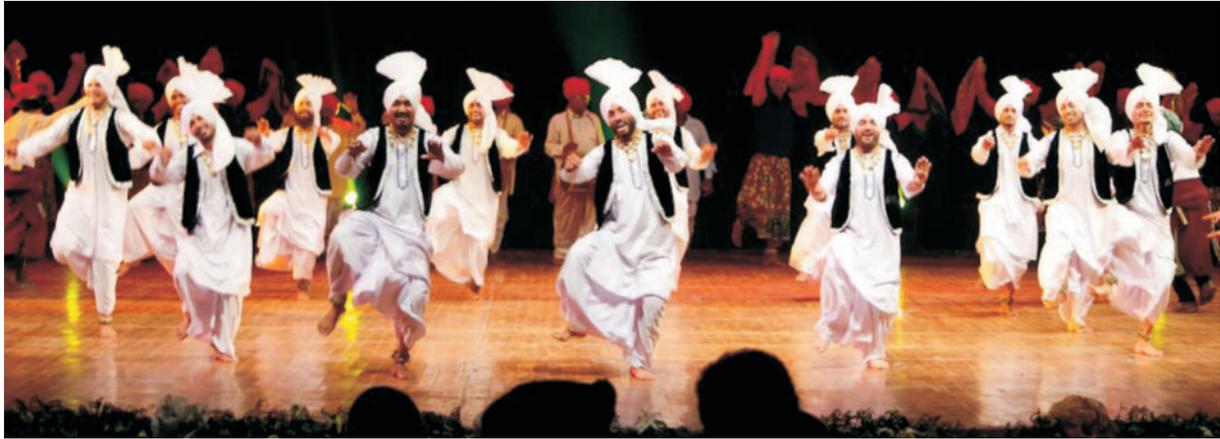
The *Malwai Giddha* is very popular among the men folk of the Malwa area of Punjab, comprising of Muktsar, Bathinda, Faridkot, Ferozpur, Sangrur,



Mansa and Patiala districts. The dance used to be performed by veteran bachelors. The pulsating rhythm of the dance is created by the large *Dhol*. Besides the *Dhol*, several instruments are used by the performers themselves – these include the *Chimta*, *Tumbi*, *Sap*, *Buckchu*, *Gadvi-Chhitar*, *Kato*, *Kartara* and *Dholki*. The instruments are not just for show, but the performers have to play them in rhythm with the *Dhol*. The

performer needs to know not only how to play the instrument but also how to carry it. The instruments are all decorated. With the beats of the *Dhol*, the young men enter the performance arena and form a circle. One of the participants comes forward and sings a *boli*. Towards the end of the *boli* there is a sudden burst of enthusiasm, with everyone in the group playing his instrument to the rhythm of the *Dholak* and singing the last line of the *boli* in chorus. Two participants come forward and perform, while the others make rhythmic and pleasing body movements. With a loud beat of the drum, the first set of performers step back, and are replaced by other participants presenting a new *boli*. The cycle of music and dance is repeated.





JHOOMER

In Punjab the mood is always of energy, emphasizing its people's zest for life. *Jhoomer* is a distinct folk dance of the erstwhile southern Punjab, now a part of Pakistan, performed by men to a specific *Jhoomer* rhythm. The name is possibly derived from *Ghoomer*, meaning performance in a circle or spinning around. The dancers make a circle around the drummer and their movements consist of bending, swinging, spinning, swaying and clapping. The accompanying songs and the traditional folk poetry is based on feminine romantic emotions. The dress worn by the performers, in this dance of pre-partition days, is mostly white.

GATKA DANCE

Gatka is an ancient Indian martial art associated with the Sikhs of the Punjab and the *Tanoli* and *Gujjar* communities living in the mountainous regions of northern Pakistan. It is a complete martial system which combines spiritual, mental and physical skills in equal portions and is used for self defence and to defend others. This art exists exclusively amongst the Sikhs

who have passed down the flamboyant techniques through generations.

The sixth *guru* of the Sikh community established the institution of the *Akal Takhat Sahib*, to counter the throne of Delhi. He adorned the *Kalgi* or crown, acquired weapons and created his own force. The tenth *guru*, *Guru Govind Singh*, adorned the *Panj Piaras* (the five loved ones) and gave them holy water, which produced in them some divine force. He combined worship and power and made his *Khalsa* into a place for the saint-warriors. It became necessary for the warriors to learn some form of martial art. *Gatka* was the unique and advanced martial art form that was taught in the *Khalsa*. In this martial art form traditional weapons like the sword, shield, lance, sticks, daggers, balls of





iron tied to a chain, *Pattas* etc are used. In this aesthetically presented martial art form the accompanying musical instruments are the drum, *Nagara* and *Narsingha*.

After the Anglo-Sikh wars, this martial art technique was banned by the new British administrators of India in the mid-19th century. The Punjabi martial art which re-emerged after 1857 had changed significantly. The new style applied the sword-fighting techniques to the wooden stick. In this style of stick-fighting, wooden sticks are intended to simulate swords. The word *Gatka* refers to the wooden sticks used.





Haryana



GHOOMER

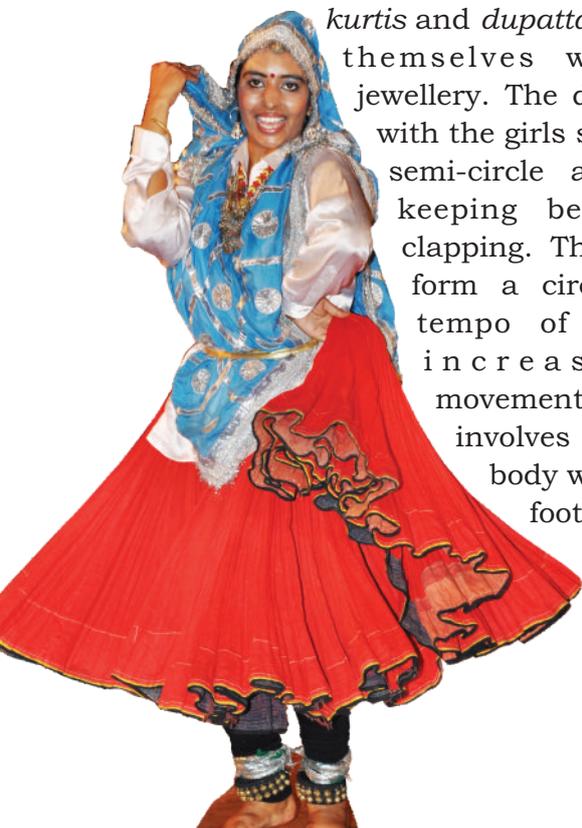
The *Ghoomer* dance is popular in the western part of Haryana, and is performed by girls living in the border areas of Haryana and Rajasthan, at festivals like *Holi*, *Gangaur Puja* and *Teej*. The girls wear bright coloured *lehengas*,

kurtis and *dupattas* and adorn themselves with silver jewellery. The dance begins with the girls standing in a semi-circle and singing, keeping beat through clapping. The girls then form a circle and the tempo of the dance increases. The movement of the dance involves holding the body weight on one foot and moving forward and spinning

around. Towards the end of the dance, as the tempo of the dance increases further, the dancers whirl around in pairs. The accompanying songs are full of satire and humour and refer to contemporary events, and are sung to the beats of the *Nagara*, *Dholak*, *Been* and *Harmonium*.

RASIA

Various genres of folk songs are heard in Haryana, like the *Gharwa*, *Gyan*, *Jhoolana*, *Patka*, *Rasia* and *Chaupaia*. The songs belong to different parts of the state and differ in the styles of singing. *Rasia* songs, sung to the accompaniment of the *Bum Dhol* are called *Bum Rasia*. These songs sing the praises of Lord *Krishna* and describe different events from his life. Most of the *Bum Rasia* songs are associated with *Holi*. In the *Taal Rasia* songs the beat of the songs is kept through clapping. *Dandak Rasia* is performed to the rhythm of sticks and the



Mandal Rasia is presented with the singers forming a circle or semi-circle.

PHAG

Spring comes to India resplendent in the colours of *abir* as the magic of *Holi* sweeps through the land. *Phag* is a typical folk dance of Haryana, performed in the month of *Phagun*, to celebrate *Holi*. Women in brightly coloured clothes and men in multi-coloured turbans dance in perfect rhythm to the beats of the *Tasha*, *Nagara*, *Been*, *Harmonium* and *Dhol*. The male performers enter the performance area running and singing traditional songs, expressing joy at the arrival of the mellow month of *Phagun*. They act out the spirit of *Holi* with *gulal* or coloured powder and *pichkaris* or sprinklers. They are followed by the women carrying *koradas* – knotted lengths of cloth – which they use to playfully hit the men.

The men try to defend themselves as well as they can with *shuntis* or sticks, all the while following the rhythm of the song, which gets faster and faster. Popular in the Faridabad district, the dance originated from the *Raas Leela* of Lord *Krishna*.

JANGAM DANCE

Jangam is a traditional style of singing in Haryana, which has now been converted into a dance for stage presentations. *Jangam* is also popular in Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and Jammu. *Jangam* means ‘originating from the *Jaang* (thigh)’. It is believed that the god *Jangam* was born as a priest from the thighs of Lord *Shiva*. *Jangam* songs eulogise Lord *Shiva* and they are sung all through the night on *Mahashivaratri*. As the singers sing and sway, they chant ‘*Bum Bum*’ and so the singers are known as *Bum Lahari*.





The main accompaniments of this dance are bells, cymbals and the one-stringed *Ektara*.

DHAMAL



The *Dhamal* dance is popular in the Ahir areas of Gurgaon. The dance begins with the Been player sounding the first long note – then the *Dhol*, *Tasha* and *Nagara* pick up the beat, and the dance begins. Some of the dancers carry large *Daphs* in their hands, frilled with brightly coloured fabric. The others carry *shuntis* or sticks of medium length wrapped in tinsel and tasselled at both ends. Other accompanying instruments are the *Sarangi*, *Jhanj*, *Kartal* and *Bansuri*. The dancers first form a row or semi-circle

and sit down with their heads bowed, seeking the blessings of Goddess *Bhavani*, Lord *Ganesha* and the Holy Trinity of *Brahma*, *Vishnu* and *Maheshwara*. They then rise and form a circle and begin the dance. The dance, which consists mainly of jumping movements, gradually increases in tempo. The dancers are the singers too, though they are accompanied by one or more additional singers. The songs, which are called *Dhamal* songs, narrate deeds of valour or romantic tales. Wearing the *dhoti*, *kurta*, turban and a coloured cloth around the waist, the performers move with the flow of the music.

LOOR

Loor, literally meaning girl, is a popular dance of the girls of the Bagar area of Haryana. Performed to mark the onset of spring and the sowing of Rabi crops, the song and dance sequence is generally presented in the form of questions and answers. The dancers, wearing bright coloured *lehengas*, *kurtis* and *dupattas*, divide themselves into two teams. The teams bait each other and witty verbal exchanges ensue. The performance ends on a friendly note, with vigorous dancing.





Uttar Pradesh



BARSANE KI LATMAAR HOLI

Lord Krishna is undoubtedly the most popular of all Hindu gods. His playfulness and love for pranks, his fondness for the *gopinis* of Vrindavan, his love for *Radha* which defied all convention, are qualities that make him human and lovable. During *Holi*, the

men of Mathura proceed towards Barsana, in a joyous procession, singing and dancing all the way, and throwing *abir* and *gula* all around. At Barsana, near a temple, the local residents gather to welcome them and play *Holi* with them. The women of Barsana discarding their veils and holding sticks or *lathis* in their hands join the festivities. The celebration of *Lathmaar Holi* begins where groups of women mockingly attack the shielded men with the *lathis* and the men pretend to save themselves with shields. On *Dashami*, the following day, the entire festivities get repeated at

BRAJ KI HOLI

Lord *Krishna*'s life inspires people, gives them hope and fills them with love. The holy land of *Brajbhoomi* is a special place which instills in us feelings of devotion and purity. In the month of *Phalgun*, the people of holy *Brajbhoomi* celebrate *Holi*, the festival of colours. Commemorative of the victory of good over evil, the festival is celebrated with unabated enthusiasm in *Braj*. *Phoolon Ki Holi* is a popular tradition in *Barsana*, where *Radha* was born and *Nandgaon*, the place of dalliance of the divine lovers. The tradition originated since the time of the legendary divine lovers, *Radha* and *Krishna*. The people of *Barsana* and *Nandgaon* exchange greetings among themselves with flowers. The traditional festival is observed with gaiety and religious fervour. The dance concludes with the *gopinis* showering the divine lovers with flowers, creating a visual spectacle.





Nandgaon, where the menfolk from Barsana arrive to play *Holi*.

DHEDIA DANCE

Dhedia is performed all over Uttar Pradesh, particularly in Daoba region of the state. *Dhedia* festival is celebrated in the month of *Kwaar*, on *Shukla Chaturthi*.

Legend has it that despite several difficulties, Lord *Rama* conquered Lanka and the day of his return to Ayodhya is celebrated as *Vijaya Dashami*. Four days later, on

Chaturdashi, Goddess *Sita* is said to have lit a lamp in an earthen pot having holes in it and invited young girls to perform the *Dhedia* dance to pray for the well-being and long life of Lord *Rama*. Even today, by lighting lamps inside the specially designed earthen pot called *Dhedia*, the dancers worship the deity to protect their near and dear ones from any harm. This graceful dance is performed to the soft and lilting tunes of *Awadhi* songs.

MAYUR

Mayur dance of Braj in Uttar Pradesh is performed during monsoon to celebrate the soothing greenery of nature during the rainy season. The dance is named after the national bird *Mayur* (peacock) and is also known as the *Mayur-Morani* dance. In this dance the performers dress themselves like the peacock and peahen and their dancing movements and gestures signify the gait of a pair of peacocks. Lord *Krishna* as a peacock shows his love for his beloved *Radha* who





singing and dancing. Women often use singing as a medium to convey their inner thoughts and pain. With the arrival of autumn, the women go to the forests to collect *mahua* seeds, with which they make alcoholic beverages. After consuming the beverage, the villagers shed all inhibitions and perform the *Jhoomar* with gay abandon, to the accompaniment of the *Madar*. The dance consists of bending, swinging,

is in the form of a peahen. The dance gains momentum when the peahen joins the peacock and both begin dancing with great gusto.

spinning and swaying movements, from which the dance derives its name.

JHOOMAR NRITYA

Jhoomar is a very popular style of singing in Uttar Pradesh and east Bihar. The melodious and rhythmic singing style and accompanying music enthralls the entire village community to join in. Often dancing accompanies the singing. The *Jhoomar* folk dance is popular in the Sonbhadra district. In a village society people get rid of their tiredness through



PURBI NRITYA

In Uttar Pradesh there are many styles of singing, of which the *Purbi* style with its many variations is heard very often. Often the singing is accompanied by dancing. After a hard day's work the farmers gather together in the evenings to sing and dance to relieve themselves of their tiredness. This dance is an expression of pride of the farmers of Uttar Pradesh. The dance brings together the farmers of the state in a bond of brotherhood.





PAI DANDA

The *Pai Danda* dance is said to have its origins in the childhood days of Lord *Krishna*, when as a young cowherd boy, he would take the cattle for grazing, with the other young cowherds. The young children would entertain themselves by getting into mock battles wielding small sticks. These mock fights have been stylized into the *Pai Danda* dance. This robust martial dance is performed by the men of the *Ahir* community of Hamirpur, Mahoba and Banda districts of Bundelkhand, where this art form is very popular. The dancers are dressed in traditional attire, with *ghungroos* tied to their waists and multi-

coloured silk threads hanging from them. Moving to the music of the *Dhol*, *Tasha* and flute, the dancers rotate in circular motions, holding the small sticks in both their hands. They strike each others' sticks in perfect rhythm and at the same



time perform acrobatic feats. The movements include gestures of attack and defense. Sitting and skipping positions are also assumed.

CHARKULA DANCE

The *Charkula* dance is associated with the Braj area of Uttar Pradesh, particularly with the village of Mukhrai in Mathura. The dance, performed by married women, is a celebration of the birth of *Radha* and is believed to be inspired by *Sree Radhika's* grandmother. Legend says that the lady ran out of her house with a *chakra* or wheel on her head, to announce the birth of *Radha*. The dance is an enactment of the joyous expression of *Radha's* grandmother. The faces of the women performing the dance are veiled throughout the performance. The women carry a multi-tiered heavy metallic wheels weighing 40 to 50 Kgs., on their heads. The wheel has a total of 51 to 108 oil lamps arranged on the rims of tiers of the wheel, and pots in the centre between the tiers. The dance is also associated with *Krishna's Govardhan Leela*. While women dance, the men sing *Rasia* folk songs in honour of Lord *Krishna*. The accompanying musical instruments are the *Nagara*, *Algoza*, *Thali*, *Bansuri*, *Manjira*, *Kharatal* and *Harmonium*.





Rajasthan



KALBELIA DANCE

The *Kalbelia* dance, also known as the *Sapera* dance or the Snake Charmer's dance, is the dance of the womenfolk of the *Kalbelia* community of Rajasthan, who were once professional snake catchers and snake charmers by occupation. It is performed to the plaintive notes of the *Been*, the snake charmer's pipe, and a frame drum, *Daph*, to keep the rhythm. The *Kalbelias* have traditionally been a fringe group in society, living in spaces outside the village where they reside in makeshift camps called *deras*. The *Kalbelias* move their *deras* from one place to another in a circuitous route, repeated over time. On festive occasions, the dancers belonging to the *Nath* sect adorn their traditional black swirling skirts and perform the dance to the accompaniment of traditional songs, which narrate tales of

mythological heroes and folklores of the land, handed down via the oral tradition. The dance movements are circular and swaying, reminiscent of the graceful and supple movements of the snake, which in traditional contexts would be seen in the background with the *Been* player. Since this street show has been transferred on stage, the dance has accelerated in tempo, acquired its dark costume and added accompaniments such as the





watching the elders practising at home.

LANGA AND MANGANIYAR SINGERS

bowed *Sarangi*, the flute and the Jew's harp called *Morchhang*. As the black *ghagras* embellished with mirror work and metal threads swirl around rapidly, sometimes about 15 times without a break, it is a spectacular sight. The dress is made by the women themselves. An interesting fact about the *Kalbelia* dance is that it is never formally taught to the next generation. The children learn by

The *Langas* and *Manganiyars* are folk singers hailing mainly from the districts of Jaisalmer and Barmer, in western Rajasthan. Their repertoire includes thousands of songs which are sung on different occasions like engagements, marriages, childbirth, festivals and even to express the sorrow of separation from one's beloved. Whatever be the occasion, the *Langas* and *Manganiyars* have the most appropriate song for it. The communities are known for their skilful singing and virtuosity in playing of various musical instruments like the *Sarangi*, *Kamaycha*,





Khartal, Morchhang, Algoza, Dholak, Satara, Murali, Sarnai and Harmonium. Though Muslims by faith, the *Langas* and *Manganiyars* sing in praise of Hindu gods and goddesses, these songs having been passed on to them by their forefathers through oral tradition. Their patrons, known as *Jajmaans*, belong to both the Hindu and Muslim communities and the singers are remunerated for the services rendered in different ways. Their music borders on the classical and they are often invited to sing and present instrumental music in the homes of their patrons and in the temples.

long distances to fill water in a *chari* or pot, for the household, is a part of the everyday lives of the women of the desert. This daily chore is gracefully depicted in the *Chari* dance, performed to the accompaniment of the *Dhol*, *Harmonium*, *Nagada*, *Bankia*, *Thali* and *Dholak*. Wearing colourful traditional dresses, the women balance the pots perfectly on their heads. *Kakra* or cotton seeds

CHARI

Chari is the dance of the women of the *Gujjar* and *Mali* communities of Kishangarh. Travelling





dipped in oil are ignited and kept inside the pots and the women dancing with the flaming metal pots on their heads produce a beautiful visual effect. The movements are simple and the dance is performed at marriages, on the occasion of the birth of a child and other social and festive occasions.

CHAKRI

The *Chakri* dance, which as the name implies, involves a series of fast and vigorous spinning movements, was first performed by the women of the *Kanjar* tribe settled in Baran and Kota districts. Later, the dance form migrated to other parts of Rajasthan, namely Haroti, Barod and Chippa. Music is a key element of the dance. Dressed in colourful glass sequined *ghagras*, the dancers move to the rhythm of the *Dholak*, *Nagada* and *Daph*, provided by the menfolk. The dance enlivens all

joyous, auspicious occasions, weddings, pre-wedding celebrations etc. The dance is also performed to welcome guests on special occasions. *Chakri* requires great expertise and perfection, as the dancers spin at high speed in pairs, losing themselves in the performance. It takes years of practice to perform the energetic, swirling motions flawlessly. Whirling around in their long, flowing *ghagras*, the girls appear like spinning tops, and hence the name *Chakri*. The fact that the dancers enjoy themselves while dancing is reflected in their faces.





GHOOMER

The *Ghoomer* dance is a community dance of the women of the state, performed on auspicious occasions. It was originally the dance of the *Bhil* tribe, but has now been adopted by other Rajasthani communities. The *Kachhhwaha* clan of the *Rajputs*

defeated the *Bhils*, but agreed to a peaceful co-existence. The royalty picked up some Bhil traditions and practices, among which is the *Ghoomer* dance. This very feminine and elegant dance used to be performed in the *zenana* quarters of the royal residence. In some places the



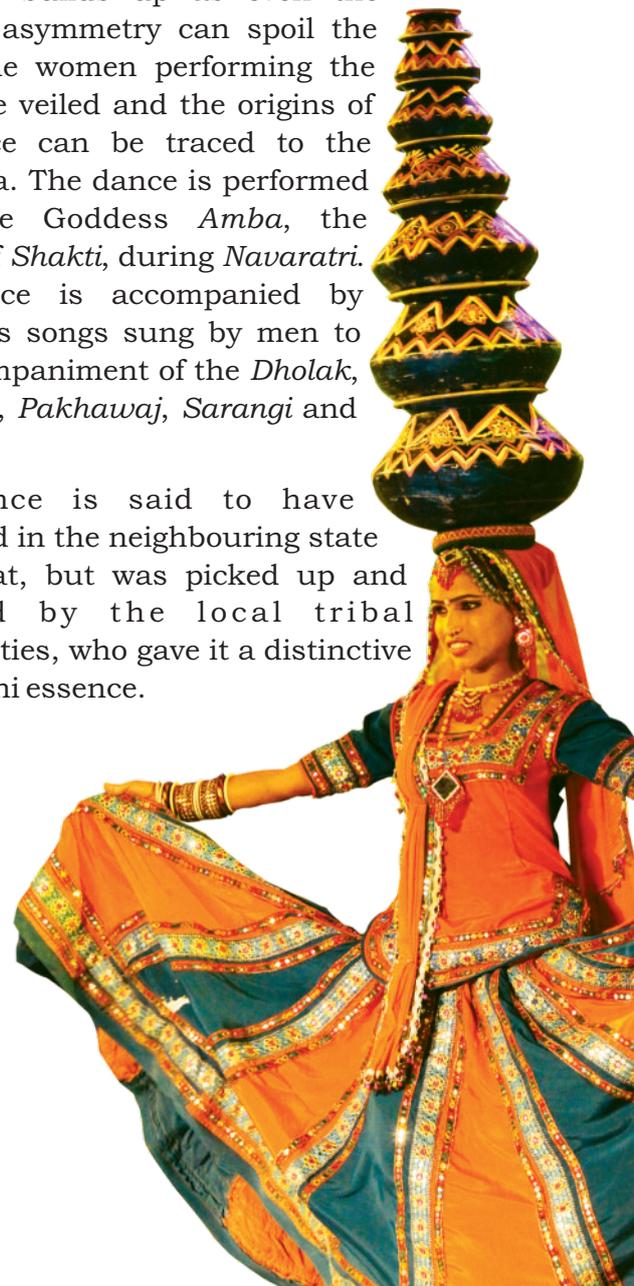
bride performs the *Ghoomer* after being welcomed in her husband's home. The name of the dance is derived from the 'ghoomna' or the slow flaring of the colourful *ghagras*, embellished with mirror work, as the women twirl around in circles. With their faces covered with veils, the dancers move clockwise and anti-clockwise, sometimes holding hands and occasionally clapping to the beat of the song. The *Ghoomer* seen in the Kota-Bundi region is particularly lively and joyous. The swaying movements are simple, and the special footwork conveys the spirit of an auspicious occasion. Women of all age groups join in the dance, which can sometimes continue for the whole night. Dressed in the traditional *kurti*, *kanchli* and *lehenga*, the women of Marwar, Mewar and Dhundhar regions present this dance which has slow rhythmic movements and subtle movements of the hands. The men, dressed in *dhoti*, *angarkha* and *safa*, provide the musical accompaniment with the *Shehnai*, *Dhol*, *Dholak* and *Nagada*.

BHAVAI

The *Bhavai* is a highly skilled folk dance of the state performed by both male and female performers. The dancers balance a large number of earthen pots or brass pitchers on their head while dancing simultaneously. Traditionally, this dance used to be performed by women belonging to the *Jat*, *Bhil*, *Raigar*, *Meena*, *Kumhar* and *Kalbelia* communities, who had exceptional skills of balancing, developed by carrying a number of water-filled pots on the head over long distances in the desert. The *Kalbelia* tribe of snake handlers is most proficient

in the skilful balancing act –they can even perform a salutation while balancing seven to eleven earthen urns on their head. The dancers pirouette, gyrate and sway to the music with 8 - 9 pitchers on their head. The dancer not only balances the pots on the head, but also climbs on to the rim of a brass plate, an open sword, a plate placed on brass tumblers, sharp iron nails, burning embers or pieces of broken glass. Sometimes, the dancers put one glass, two glasses, three glasses and so on up to seven or eight glasses on the head and then the earthen pots and continue dancing. With every move the suspense builds up as even the slightest asymmetry can spoil the show. The women performing the dance are veiled and the origins of the dance can be traced to the feudal era. The dance is performed to please Goddess *Amba*, the symbol of *Shakti*, during *Navaratri*. The dance is accompanied by melodious songs sung by men to the accompaniment of the *Dholak*, *Manjeera*, *Pakhawaj*, *Sarangi* and *Bhungal*.

The dance is said to have originated in the neighbouring state of Gujarat, but was picked up and adapted by the local tribal communities, who gave it a distinctive Rajasthani essence.



KACHHI GHODI



The *Kachhi Ghodi* dance is performed by the members of the *Bhat* community during marriages and on other social and festive occasions. In Rajasthan, the legend of Rana Pratap Singh is incomplete if his loyal horse *Chetak* is not mentioned. Horses were also used by the highway men, and there are many stories about them. The *Kachhi Ghodi* depicts the confrontations between the *Bavaria* bandits and the passing commoners. Wearing bright costumes, wielding swords in their hands and riding dummy horses, the dancers of the *Bhat* community present these historical tales in a dramatized manner, to the

accompaniment of melodious ballads. Pirouetting, mock fights and vigorous dancing makes this art form exciting.

AANGI GAIR

Gair is a popular and traditional dance form of Rajasthan performed by men during *Holi* after the crops have been harvested. The *Jats*, *Brahmins*, *Bhils* and other communities of the state celebrate the festival with joyful hope that peace and happiness will reign. Presentation of *Gair* is an important part of *Holi*. *Gair* is performed as a community dance, in circular formation, in the Marwar, Mewar and Sekhawati regions, but there are differences in the presentation of the *Gair* in the three regions.

The *Aangi Gair* is a colourful dance from the Barmer district, deeply connected to the cultural life of the region. The dancers carry long wooden sticks in their hands and dance to the beats of the *Dhol* and *Thali*, moving in a circle. The movements of the dancers change with the change in rhythm of the *Dhol* and *Thali*. The dancers wear *aangi* or long red skirts and traditional headgear.





Gujarat

RAAS

Raas, in its many forms, is one of the oldest and most popular dance forms of Gujarat. *Raas* is a unique synthesis of folk dance, folk art, vibrant colours and folk music. Circular movements with speed and grace are the main features of *Raas*. The beats of the *Dhol*, the colourful costumes and the vigour of the dance leaves the audience, spellbound. *Raas* is performed in different styles in the different regions of Gujarat. Some forms are performed only by men, while in others men and women dance together.

DANDIYA RAAS

Navaratri celebrations in the western states of India are never complete without the rhythmical *Dandiya*, where

intricate footsteps are matched to the uniform beating of wooden sticks. The dance tries to incorporate the cosmic movement of the spheres in its circular motions. The *Dandiya Raas* has been described in the *Mahabharata* as *Hailisak Krida* or *Dand Rasak*.

MER RAAS /MANIYARO RAAS

Mer Raas, also known as *Maniyaro Raas*, is performed during the festive occasion of *Janmashtami*, the birth celebrations of Lord *Krishna*. *Mer Raas* has its origin in *Krishna Leela*. The dancers form a circle while performing, as they strike the *dandiya*s or sticks held in their hands, to the beat of the *Dhol* and *Jhanj*. Before commencing their dance, the dancers throw *gula* over their body as an





expression of joy and happiness. This *tandava* dance is performed by the members of the community during *Navaratri* celebrations and at wedding ceremonies. The singing of *Dohas* and *Chhands* - narration of tales from Lord *Krishna's* life - accompanies the dance performance. In *Mer Raas*, men exhibit martial valour and the dance is symbolic of the robust warrior traditions of the *Mer Rajput* community of Saurashtra and western parts of Gujarat. The strength and vigour of the dance is in perfect harmony with the practical life of the *Mers* which is filled with hardship and hurdles. The dancers are dressed in white -flared upper garments called *keddia* or *aangania* and trousers called *choyno*. The movements are swift and resemble a swordfight. *Mer Raas* is a unique synthesis of dance, colour and music.

DHAL TALWAR RAAS

Dhal Talwar Raas is a variation of *Mer Raas*, performed with real swords or *talwars* and shields or *dhals*, and celebrates the martial traditions of the *Mer Rajput* and the *Kanabi* farmer communities of the Sorath and Halar regions. The accompanying songs describe how the soldiers bravely fought in war and emerged victorious. Through spinning and jumping actions, scenes of attack and defence in the battlefield are enacted. The beats of the *Dhol*, called the *Maniyaro Taal*, and the fast intricate movements bring alive the warrior traditions of the state. In the climax of the dance some performers hold two swords and the sword fight becomes more exciting. In contrast to the dance of the *Mer Rajputs*, the dance of the farmers of



the *Kanabi* community begins with slow movements, with the tempo increasing gradually, and ending in an exciting climax.

MANJIRA RAAS

Manjira Raas, another variation of the *Raas* of Gujarat, is also performed during *Janmashtami*, *Navaratri* and other festive occasions. The dance is very popular among the men of the *Padhar* community, hailing from Surendranagar and Jhalavad regions. *Manjiras* or small

cymbals are struck in different rhythms and the presentation is aesthetically and visually very rich. Adorned in traditional costumes of *bhati*, *kalacho*, and *fenta* (turban) or *mel* (scarf), the dancers tie *ghungroos* on their ankles. Through delicate movements, the dancers, who are fishermen by profession, depict the different ways of rowing the fisherman's boat.

HUDO RAAS



Hudo Raas, a dance displaying strength, is popular in the Saurashtra region, among the *Bharwad Rabari*, *Goala* and *Koli Patel* communities. As the performers are a sheep rearing community, the movements of the dance resemble sheep fights. The women stand in front of the men and hit each other playfully with their bodies,



similar to sheep ramming their heads onto one another. The leg extensions seen in this form of *Raas* is very interesting. The dance is performed for three days during the folk fair of *Tametar*. Richly embroidered and well decorated umbrellas are the props used. The *Dholak*, *Shehnai* and *Jhanj* provide the musical accompaniment.

Beda Raas is a dance performed by the womenfolk of the Saurashtra region, during *Navaratri* celebrations. This beautiful dance form demonstrates a high level of balance and concentration. The girls dance with a number of *Bedas* or pots artistically placed on their heads – there can be sets of 9 pots, 11 pots or even 52 pots (*Bavan Beda Nritya*). This dance is very popular among the young girls of the *Sathavara* tribe, a distinguished community of agriculturists. The girls pray for a good husband and seek the blessings of *Shakti Mata* and Lord *Krishna*. Wearing the traditional embroidered skirts called *chaniya*, the girls sway to the rhythms created by the male musicians on the *Dhol*, *Shehnai*, *Harmonium*, *Ravanhatho*, *Manjira* and

BEDA RAAS



Kansijoda. The tradition of welcoming special guests in Gujarat by women carrying water pots on their heads has been blended with *Raas* and *Garba* to create this dance. All through the performance the audience is spellbound.

KANBI PATEL

RAAS

For the farming community of Gujarat, there is no greater joy than a bountiful harvest. The *Kanbi Patel Raas* is the Raas of the farmers and depicts their daily lives. Performed during *Navaratri* and *Janmashtami*, by the male members of the community, the dance is accompanied by the *Dhol*, *Dokad*, *Jhanj* and *Pavo*. The main singer begins the singing and the others take the cue from him. The *dandiyas* or wooden sticks (sometimes hollow metal sticks) and the *ghungroos* tied to the feet are used to maintain the rhythm. Movements like the *Chabkhi*, *Chakari* and *Besani* are reflective of the toiling farmer's rigorous lifestyle, their love for nature and their deep faith.

JAT RAAS

Jat Raas is performed by the *Jat* community of Kutch, who are of Islamic faith. Dressed in the *Pathani pajamo*, white or light coloured shirts and white

turbans, and accompanied by the music of the *Dhol* and *Jhanj*, the dancers perform with sticks in their hands. Though performed by men, the movements of the dance are soft. Towards the end of the dance the tempo increases and the *Chabkhi* and *Besani* movements of whirling are seen.

GARABO/GARBA DANCE

The *Garabo* or *Garba* dance, believed to be 5000 years old, is performed by women and is an important part of the *Navaratri* celebrations. *Garba* is linked to the worship of *Shakti*, and its origin is



believed to be the worship of Goddess *Jagadamba*. The word *Garabo* has originated from the Sanskrit word *Garbhadeep*, meaning an earthen pot with a lighted lamp. The earthen pot is the symbol of the body and the lighted lamp inside signifies the divine soul. It is believed that *Usha*, daughter of King *Banasur* of Assam and wife of Lord *Krishna's* grandson *Aniruddha*, is the creator of the *Garba* dance. As per

another version, *Parvati* herself taught this dance to *Usha*. Traditionally associated with *Navaratri*, the dance is also performed during *Diwali*, *Gokul Ashtami* and at weddings. *Usha* is said to have spread the dance among the *Yadava* women. Today, it is popular among all women of the state. The dance is performed in circular motions, with dancers measuring time by clapping to particular beats of the *Dhol*. The other musical instruments used are the *Khanjari*, *Manjira* and *Harmonium*. The dance is now more celebratory in nature, unlike its old devotional form.

GARABI



A variation of the *Garabo* dance, the *Garabi* dance is performed by the men in Saurashtra seeking the blessings of *Bhavani* or *Durga*, during *Navaratri* and *Diwali* celebrations. The main difference between *Garabo* and *Garabi*, is that in *Garabo* there is a lot of clapping to keep the beat, but in *Garabi*, the clapping is limited. Also, *Garabo* is performed by women and *Garabi* is sung by men. Nowadays, women are also invited to join

in the dance and the repertoire of songs has been extended to include invocations to Lord *Krishna*.

DIVO

Divo is a variation of the *Garba* dance, and is an integral part of the *Navaratri* celebrations of Gujarat. This invocatory dance is performed in praise of Goddess *Shakti*, with the dancers holding lighted lamps in their hands.

RANDAL

The Randal dance is a ritualistic dance, performed in Gujarati households, when prayers for a male child are answered. The two wives of *Surya Devta* are known as Randal. The head of the family takes a vow to establish the goddesses in his home, if the family's prayers for a son are granted. The ritual is completed after the birth of the child. The women of the house sing songs and dance in praise of the goddesses Randal, as an integral part of this ritual.

MEWASI DANCE

The *Mewasi* dance, another tribal dance of Gujarat, is performed by the members of the *Bhil*, *Vasava* and *Tadvi* communities who inhabit the Mewas delta created by the Narmada, Orsang and Hiran rivers. This highly energetic



dance is performed by the young girls and boys from both the bride and bridegroom's families during the *Chandla Sagai* or engagement ceremony. The dance is also performed on festivals like *Diwali* and *Holi*. The *Mewasi Vanavasis*, as these people are known, are very hard-working and this is reflected in the enthusiasm and vigour of the dance. The dancers are attired in colourful traditional costumes. The

women wear jewellery like the *Lodiya*, *Hasli*, *Hiriya*, *Kada* and *Pageradi* and the men tie turbans or *Pagdis* with peacock feathers tucked in them.

DAANGI KAHALYA DANCE

The *Daangi Kahalya* dance is performed by the *Daangi* community of south Gujarat, on the border of Maharashtra, usually during *Holi* and other festivals. The dance is an integral part of the social life, feasts, fairs, festivals, ceremonies and ritualistic worship of the community. Like all the other tribal dances, the *Daangi Kahalya* dance too is





highly rhythmic and percussive, and has blended Gujarati, Maharashtrian and Dravidian cultures. The dance is performed in a circular formation, with the musicians in the centre. The men have their arms around the women's shoulders and the women affectionately hold the mens' waists and form a chain or *Shrinkhala* while making swift, serpentine movements. The dance has a total of 27 different kinds of movements. Creation of human pyramids is a spectacular feature of this dance form.

TIPPANI

Certain folk dances have no religious or festive context, but typically represent community activities and functional aspects. *Tippani* is the folk dance of the *Koli* community of the Chorwad region of Saurashtra. This dance is performed by the women labourers, while making the roofs or the flooring of houses by pressing lime into the foundation, and even while laying roads. A long bamboo stick about 3 – 4 feet long with a blunt square end, called the *Tippani* is used. The rhythm that is created while beating the *Tippani* on the floor, for levelling, is captured in this dance. The rhythmic musical process helps the women to lighten the burden of their monotonous and



arduous work. The process of casting the roof or making the floor continues for about 5 – 7 days, when this dance is performed every day. The roof made through this process is so strong that even when there is a heavy shower, there is no leakage. For stage presentations the men provide the musical accompaniment with the *Dhol*, *Sharani* and *Jhanj*. The women are dressed in white blouses, black wraparound skirts called *jimi*, yellow upper cover called *ghatadi* and *odhnis*.

SIDDHI DHAMAL

The *Siddhi* tribe of Gujarat is of east African origin. They arrived in India about eight centuries ago, and went on to establish their settlements in the western coast of the country, in different parts of Gujarat like Bharuch, Bhavnagar, Junagarh and Surat. The dances of the *Siddhi* tribe have retained much of their original African character and are specially noted for their complex rhythms and spirited martial

movements. The *Siddhis* are followers of Islam and perform this dance on the eve of the *Urs* of their prophet, the *Sufi* saint, Bava Gaur. Though of Islamic faith, they begin their dance with the blowing of the conch shell, a typically Hindu ritual. In this dance, African music styles and musical instruments have mingled with local influences. Through the intoxicating drumbeats and the energetic, agile dancing, the *Siddhis* praise their saint for giving them joy that can only be expressed through dance. The performance also features solos on the *Malunga*, an instrument resembling the *Brazilian Berimbau*. Their costume is embellished with peacock feathers, as the forests they inhabit have a large number of peacocks. The highly rhythmic dance gradually picks up tempo and towards the end of the performance, the dancers go into a trance. Like their African ancestors, the *Siddhis* are masters of rhythm dancing. The climax of the dance is when they toss coconuts up in the air and break the falling coconuts on their heads.





*Dadra and
Nagar Haveli*

DHOL DANCE



The Union Territory of Dadra and Nagar Haveli has its own unique tribal culture that includes various rituals, festivals and folk dances. The rituals play a predominant role in the life of the tribal communities of Dadra and Nagar Haveli, particularly the *Varlis*, whose religious beliefs are based on the fact that the sun and the moon are the two eyes of God. The *Dhol* dance is performed by the men of the *Varli* and *Konkana* communities. As the name implies, the *Dhol* or drum is the main accompanying musical instrument of this vibrant and colourful dance form. The dance is an integral part of all social occasions and festivals like end of a good harvesting season, *Holi*, *Diwali* etc. The dancers follow the beats of the *Dhol* to present different body formations and create pyramid-like structures.

TUR AND THALI DANCE

The *Tur* is a two faced cylindrical clay drum with tanned leather strapped across its two faces. The *Thali* is a metal dish of cylindrical shape. The *Tur* and *Thali* dance, performed by the *Dhodi* and *Dubla* tribes, uses these two indigenous musical instruments. The performers dance to the rhythm created by the *Turwala*, who beats the *Tur*, and the *Thaliwala*, who beats the *Thali*. The dance is performed at marriages and other social and festive occasions.

BOHADA DANCE



The *Bohada* dance is a masked dance of Dadra and Nagar Haveli, performed by the *Konkani* tribesmen on summer nights, under the light of torches. The masks, made from a single piece of wood and decorated with bamboo strips and coloured paper depict mythological figures and gods and goddesses like the *Pancha Pandavas*, *Ravana*, *Ganesha*

and tribal deities like *Kaloba*, *Mhasoba* and *Rangatai*. The movements of the performers bring alive the characters they are depicting. The performers move from one village to another with their performance. The accompanying musical instruments include the *Sur*, *Kahali* and *Sambal*.

TARPA DANCE



The *Tarpa* is an indigenous musical instrument made from gourd and bamboo sticks. The *Tarpa* dance, performed by the men and women of the *Varli*, *Konkana* and *Koli* communities, at religious festivals and social occasions, revolves around the use of the *Tarpa*. The man playing the *Tarpa* stands at the centre of the performing arena. The men dressed in *dhoti*, *banyan*, *bandi* and *safa* and the women wearing traditional *sarees* move around him in a circle, with their hands holding each others' waists. As the tunes of the *Tarpa* change, the dancers change the pace of their steps to synchronize with the new tune.





Daman and Diu



MACHHI DANCE

The people of Daman and Diu have many similarities with the people of the neighbouring state of Gujarat. The traditions and social customs of the people living in this Union Territory have

common features with those seen in Gujarat. Dance and music are an integral part of Daman culture. The *Machhi* dance is the lively ritualistic dance of the fisherman community of Daman,



performed to invoke the sea deity, *Arun*. The dance is performed on all religious and festive occasions like *Nareli Purnima*, *Ganesh Chaturthi*, *Holi* and *Navaratri*. The men and women are dressed in traditional attire and the women wear

silver and gold jewellery typical of the area. The women carry baskets and sing melodious songs to the accompaniment of the *Dholak*, *Naal*, *Khanjari* and *Harmonium*. The men use a variety of fishing objects like oars and fishing nets and depict the fishing process in the high seas. As a part of this highly energetic dance, coconuts and other ritualistic





offerings are made to sea, to ensure the protection and prosperity of the community.

PORTUGUESE DANCE

The people of Daman and Diu have a multi-faceted cultural heritage which is an amalgamation of European, Indian and tribal elements. The island of Diu was a Portuguese colony and became a part of India in 1961. A strong Portuguese influence is seen in the architecture, attire, cuisine and performing arts of Diu. The Christian community of Diu would perform the Portuguese dance as a part of the Christmas and New Year celebrations, to the accompaniment of western musical instruments like the guitar and drums. Nowadays, it is performed on all happy occasions and festivals. An interesting inter-mingling of cultures is portrayed through this dance. The



distinctive Portuguese apparel of the dancers catches the eye.



Goa



JAGOR

Jagor is a folk drama form believed to be the precursor of modern Marathi theatre in Goa. A *Jagor* has no continuous plot or narrative and is presented by members of both the Hindu and Christian communities to the deity *Jagaryo*, who has a dome shaped shrine under a peepal tree, with no image or icon in it. Hindu devotees make offerings of oil and Christian devotees light candles at the shrine. Every house of the village makes the traditional offering of *fow* (pressed rice). Though there is no fixed story in this form of folk drama, but day to day happenings and experiences are shared in the most interesting manner. *Jagor* is a prayer to the Almighty for protection from every evil that falls on the village.

The best form of this presentation can be seen in the village of Siolim in the Bardez

region of the state, where there is a traditional *Jagor*. At one time this region had 12 *Jagors*. More than 125 years ago, when the Portuguese came to power, the *Jagors* were banned. Siolim started facing many natural calamities and the villagers irrespective of religion, felt that banning of the *Jagors* had caused this. With the mediation of the church and the priests, the *Jagor* at Siolim was resumed. The *Jagor* at Siolim is performed on the first Monday after Christmas.

There are two forms of *Jagor* - one form is considered to be the exclusive prerogative of the *Pernni* community and the other is popular among the Christian *Gowdas*. The theme of the *Pernni Jagor* goes beyond mythology and tackles philosophical subjects like the origin of the universe. The Christian *Gowda Jagor* takes its themes from contemporary village life.



In a *Jagor* presentation, the *Bharbharaichya*, *Said*, *Firangi-Raja*, *Mali* (gardener), *Malani* (gardener's wife), *Mahar* (a man belonging to the caste of the same name), his wife and their son are the main characters, who sing and dance. After the completion of the *Jagor*, the *Mahar's* wife visits the village homes, where she receives offerings of *sanna* (a steamed rice preparation), roasted gram and *feni* (a local wine), on behalf of the deity. The villagers believe that keeping

up this ritual in the village averts natural calamities and helps maintain good relations among themselves.

GOFF

The *Goff* dance, associated with spring festivities, is a dance of joy and happiness, celebrating a bountiful harvest, performed by the peasant community of Canacona, Sanguem and Quepen *talukas* of Goa, during the very popular *Shigmo* festival, held in the Indian month of *Falgun*. Canacona was one of the last territories to be taken over by the Portuguese, and hence the people of the region are much more rooted to their past traditions.



At the centre of the performing area, the *mand*, a temporary roof or *mator* is erected and 6-12 colourful cords are suspended from the canopy. The dancers hold a small handkerchief called a *toni* in their right hand and hold a hanging cord with their left hand. In the first half of the dance, as the music begins, the dancers move with intricate footsteps and form a beautiful colourful braid with the hanging ropes. In the second half of the dance, the dancers reverse the pattern of dancing, unbraiding the carefully created braid, till they hang loose and



single once again. Four different kinds of braids are made in the *Goff* dance. The dance requires great concentration and there can be no mistakes as this would result in the weaving as well as the unbraiding going topsy-turvy.

Goans believe that the weaving of the

braid symbolizes the confluence of different cultural strands that Goan culture has assimilated over the centuries. When unbraided, each shows its unique identity. According to another view, the ropes represent the cultures of the different states and the religions of the different people. When braided together, it represents the multi-cultural, multi-lingual and multi-religious '*Goff of India*'. When unbraided, each shows its unique identity.

The musical instruments accompanying the *Goff* dances include the *Ghumal*, *Shehnai*, *Dhol*, *Taaso*, *Samael*, *Surta Shansi* and *Zanghat*. At times the *Harmonium* and *Tabla* are also used. Traditionally, the accompanying songs are in praise of Lord *Krishna* though nowadays popular songs are also sung.



DEKHNI



Dekhni means 'bewitching beauty' in Konkani. It is a very popular, semi-classical traditional dance form of the state, performed by women, that is a rare blend of Indian and Western cultures. The music accompanying the dance combines Indian and Western rhythm and melody, and is a beautiful combination of folk culture and Western music. The dancers are dressed in typical attire of the region and the rhythm is provided by the *Ghumat*, a folk drum.

One of the most famous *Dekhni* songs is *Hanv Saiba Poltodi Vetam*, written by Carlos Eugenio Ferreira, first published in Paris in 1895 and then in Goa in 1926. The song is about a temple dancer or *devadasi* who comes to the river bank and requests the boatman to ferry her across as she had promised to dance at a wedding on the other side of the river. The boatman refuses, saying that the water is rough and unsafe for travel. The temple dancer offers him her gold jewellery as the fare. The boatman still refuses to go across the rough waters. When the temple dancer performs a small dance exclusively for the boatman, he is mesmerized and agrees to help her so that she can keep her appointment. The Western rhythm and Indian melody of the song is livened up by the conversation between the girl and the



boatman. This *Dekhni* tune was popularized by the well-known film maker Raj Kapoor in the song *Na mangoon sona chandi* in his hit film *Bobby*.

One of the earliest *Dekhni* dances, *Kuxttoba*, is dated around 1869, which is an eulogy to, *Kuxttoba*, a member of the Rane family, who had resisted Portuguese rule as an individual. This dance is widely performed throughout Goa.

The *Dekhni* dancers carry lighted oil lamps called *pantis* and the dance movements have similarities with the classical dance forms of the country.



SAMAI

The *Samai* dance, also called the Lamp dance, is performed by the peasant community of southern and central Goa, during the *Shigmo* festival. The dancers balance the *deepaks* or traditional metallic lamps, a typical Goan handicraft, on their heads and dance to the instrumental accompaniment of the *Ghumat*, *Samael*, *Zanj*, *Shehnai* and *Surt*. The dance requires self control and discipline and the dancers have to dance very slowly, balancing the heavy lamps on their heads. Being a dance of worship, it is usually performed at religious gatherings and is accompanied by slow songs. With the lamps balanced on their heads, the dancers perform simple gymnastic movements and form pyramid-like structures. The message of the *Samai* dance is to move from darkness to light, from ignorance to knowledge. Moving towards God, gives one happiness and peace of mind.



PHUGADI

The *Phugadi* dance is a group dance performed by women. The dance form has two major variations – either the dancers dance in circular movements or in rows. In villages the circular movements is the preferred form, and in forest settlements the preferred form is in rows. A few fixed steps, hand gestures and hand claps are the elements of this dance form. Though innumerable *Phugadi* songs accompany these dances,

normally there are no musical instruments used. But, nowadays, in stage presentations, a variety of local musical instruments help to enliven the performances. The songs narrate *Puranic* stories, family life, complaints, rivalries amongst people and different customs. There are about 30 different kinds of *Phugadi* dances. A striking variation of the dance is the *Kalashi Phugadi*, which



is performed before Goddess *Mahalakshmi*, during the *vrata* observed for the goddess and other festive occasions. The dancers carry large water pitchers called *kalashes*, which are first placed at the centre of the performing area. The women lift the *kalashes* one by one and form a circle as they dance. They circulate the *kalashes* among themselves, continuously blowing air into the mouth of the *kalash*. The singing lasts even after the completion of the dance. A distinctive style of *Phugadi* is seen among the women of the *Dhangar* community – two women cross their hands and hold each other and spin around together, bending and swaying to a distinct rhythm.



TARANG MEL

Tarang Mel is another traditional dance of the state, in which the performers carry a decorated pole and banner and move rhythmically to the beat of the *Dhol* and *Tasha*. The colourfully dressed dancers march forward and backward with gentle swaying movements. On festive occasions like *Dusserah* and *Holi*, the spirited youth of the state come out

on the streets waving flags and streamers (Tarangs), inspiring and inviting one and all to imbibe the festive spirit. The beats of the *RomatDhol* and *Tasha* add excitement to the colourful atmosphere created by the rainbow-like costumes of the dancers and the varied hues of the flags and streamers that they carry.

GHODE MODNI



Ghode Modni is a spectacular dance form from the *talukas* near the northern boundary of the state, namely Bicholim, Parnem and Sattari, which were once ruled by the Marathas. *Ghode* is the horse and *Modni* is the dance-like movements and hence *Ghode Modni* is the dance of the horse mounted cavalier setting off for war. Commemorative of the victory of the Ranes, the *Maratha* rulers of *Sattari taluka* over the Portuguese,

the dancers hold the bridle of the horse with one hand and brandish an open sword with the other. About 2 to 8 dancers take part in the performance, which is seen during the *Shigmo* festival.

Wearing the traditional livery of a *Rajput* chieftain, a *Peshawai pugree* similar to the ones worn by the *Maratha* rulers, headgear made from colourful flowers and a beautifully decorated wooden horse tied to the waist, the dancers look



very regal and impressive. With *ghungoors* tied around their ankles, they move rhythmically forward and backward to the beat of drums, *Dhol*, *Tasha* and cymbals. The colourful prancing war horses move all around the village to the accompaniment of martial music. Though there are no accompanying songs, the music ensures that the dancers always have an audience.



DHANGAR

The *Dhangar* dance or *Dhangari Gaja* dance is a well-known Goan traditional dance form, performed by the *Dhangars* or shepherd community of the state, who are believed to have migrated from Kathiawar in south Gujarat. The *Dhangars*, now settled in the hilly north-western fringes of the state, are pious people and the dance is performed with devotion during *Navaratri*, the festival of nine nights, to worship *Bira Deva* or

Birumba, seeking the deity's blessings. During the nine days the head of the family observes certain rituals, and prays and dances before the family deity in the early hours of the morning. On the tenth day there is a family feast. The families then take the family idols to the village *Mand* or open space and perform this dance to appease the god. The dancers wear the traditional *Marathi* dress, which include a *kathiari*-styled white dress and





turban with colourful handkerchiefs. The musical accompaniment is provided by the *Dhol*, cymbals and a long flute, the *Pawa*. The accompanying songs bring alive the legend of the celestial lovers, *Radha* and *Krishna*. The dancers move around the *Dhol* players during the dance. The dance begins with simple footwork and a slow beat and gradually the beat becomes faster and the footwork more intricate.

MUSSAL KHELL

Mussal Khell is a song-cum-dance performed with *mussals* (pestles), in praise of valliant kings, a legacy of the southern rulers of Goa. The dance, which is a celebration of victory, was established between 980 and 1005 AD, during the reign of the *Kadamba* dynasty. It is believed that the first performance of this dance took place in front of the gate of the fort in the then capital town of Chandrapur (modern day Chandor), to celebrate the victory of the Vijayanagar prince Harihar over the *Cholas* in the early fourteenth century. Originally, the dance would be performed on the full-moon night of the Hindu month of *Phalguna*, by the *Gaokars* of Chandor. Nowadays, it is performed during the annual carnival and during the harvesting season. The main property used for this dance is the *mussal*, which is made from a long piece of bamboo hollowed in the middle. Thin metal discs are inserted in the hollowed part of the bamboo and this results in the *mussal* making a unique sound when struck on the ground. A distinctive feature of this dance is that the performers are *Khsatriyas* who have converted to Christianity and the lyrics of



the songs glorify the Hindu king, Harihara. The *Shivalingam* symbol is carried and waved and dancers with burning torches accompany it. The dance concludes with a *Devadasi* sweeping the ground where the performance has taken place and smoothening wet clay and cow dung over it, for which she is paid a token fee. After the main performance, the dancers move to the homes in the village and perform in the courtyards of the houses. As the dancers enter a home they bang their *mussals* on the ground and sing a verse that announces the arrival of the dance to their house and ask for a lamp to be brought out. The residents of Chandor believe that the village will be struck by a calamity if this ritualistic dance is not performed annually.



Maharashtra



LAVANI

Described as beautiful, dramatic and sensuous, the folk tradition of Lavani has been an important part of Maharashtra's socio-political and cultural history. An integral part of the *Tamasha* folk theatre tradition of Maharashtra, *Lavani* is the

most popular and best known celebratory folk dance form of Maharashtra, which has an independent existence too. As the name suggests, it basically depicts beauty in all its forms and dimensions, and in the process, often depicts the erotic and amorous. Although there is no restriction regarding



the choice of themes for a *Lavani* performance, this art form is at its best when dealing with themes of bravery, pathos, love and devotion. Music, poetry, dance and drama intermingle with such perfection in the rendering of *Lavani*, that it is almost impossible

to separate the various components. This popular song and dance entertainment is of three types – *Baithakichi Lavani*, *Nrityachi Lavani* and *Bhaktichi Lavani*. *Baithakichi Lavani* relies on gestures and expression rather than movement, *Nrityachi Lavani* is about love and *Bhaktichi Lavani* relates to metaphysical devotion. During the 18th and 19th centuries, when Maharashtra was a battle torn state, the *Lavani* dance served as a form of entertainment and morale booster for the tired soldiers. The dance reached its peak popularity during the 19th century *Peshwa* regime and during

this period the dance was given royal patronage. During the *Peshwa* rule, a performance would often go on till the wee hours of the night. The lead actress is draped in the traditional nine-yard *saree* and accompanied by the *Dholki*, as she sings and dances. She pauses occasionally for the typical *nakhra* to tease the audience.

KOLI DANCE

The *Kolis* and *Dhiwars*, or the fishermen community of Maharashtra, are well known for their distinct identity and lively dances. Performed by the *Koli*



(fishermen) and *Kolin* (fisherwomen), divided into two distinct groups, the *Koli* dance is energetic and brings alive the fragrance of the sea. A small group of men and women in pairs enact the main story of the dance – the *Kolin* trying to entice the *Koli*. The romance is portrayed aesthetically with the spontaneity of an emerging wave. The larger group, also in





pairs, forms the backdrop of the performance, dancing in a looped movement, depicting the rowing of a fishing boat. The dance also portrays the deep reverence and devotion of the fisherfolk for the sea. Performed during *Holi* and *Raksha Bandhan*, the dance depicts the challenges and hazards faced by the fishermen. The women wear the typical nine-yard saree and the men wear a triangular cloth called *pancha* around the waist, triangular caps and thick cotton shirts.

SONGI MUKHAWATE

In Maharashtra, *Songi Mukhawate* is performed on the occasion of *Chaitra Purnima* as part of the ritualistic worship of *Devi*, the Mother Goddess by the tribal communities living in the border areas of Maharashtra

and Gujarat, near Nasik. *Songi Mukhawate* is also performed on auspicious occasions to drive away evil spirits. The name of this dance form is directly linked to the masks worn by the two dancers who play the role of *Narsingh*. Masks are also worn by the dancers portraying the characters of *Kal Bhairav* and *Betal*, while the rest of the dancers perform with sticks in their hand. *Songi Mukhawate* performances



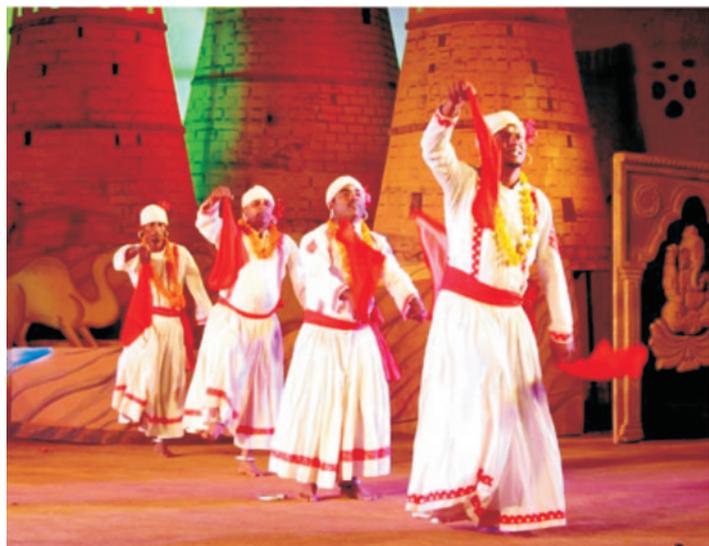


are accompanied by the *Dhol*, *Tarpawari*, *Sambal* and other musical instruments. *Pawari* players are usually attired in green robes with peacock feathers adorning their heads.

Maharashtrian costume of *dhoti*, *angrakha* and *pheta* with colourful handkerchiefs tied to their hands, the men display immense swiftness in their movements. The dancers pray for the protection of their animals and safety of their families. The dance, an expression of joy and happiness, is an integral part of all fairs held in honour of *Virudev*.

DHANGARI GAJA DANCE

The *Dhangari Gaja* dance is a traditional dance of the *Dhangars* or shepherds of Sholapur district. The *Dhangars* rear sheep and goats and sell their wool and milk to make a living. For most of the year the shepherds are out of their homes looking for fresh pastures for their cattle. However, once a year they return home to take part in a fair dedicated to their deity *Virudev*, where this prayer dance is presented. Dressed in the simple





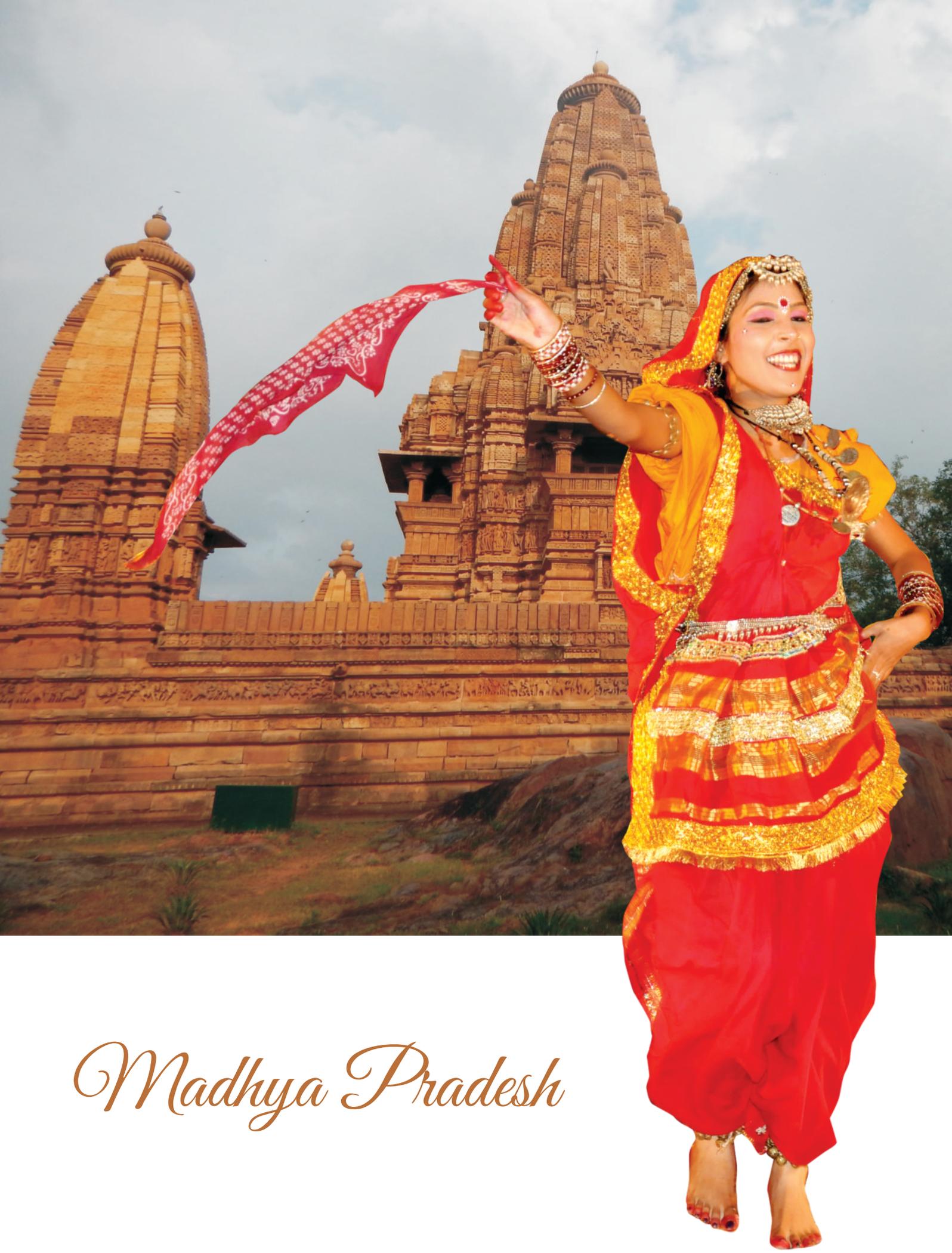
BANJARA

The *Banjaras* or gypsies are a nomadic tribe who are mainly seen in the southern fringes of Maharashtra, in the Pusad, Yavatmal and Umerkhed districts. During festivals and auspicious occasions, like weddings, birth of a child etc., the *Banjaras*, dressed in colourful costumes and ornate jewellery, dance through the night. Men wear the *dhoti*, *mundasa* and a jacket and the women wear the *ghagra* and blouse. Traditional songs and indigenous musical instruments like the *Dholak*, *Jhanj* and *Dapla* accompany the performances. Rhythmic circular movements characterize this dance form.

LEZIM DANCE

The *Lezim* dance is a martial dance form of Maharashtra performed at religious and social events. The different variations of the dance include *Ghuti Lezim*, *Ghoongroo Lezim*, *Dakhani Lezim* and *Palita Lezim*. This dance form is also seen in the neighbouring states of Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat. The accompanying musical instruments include the *Dhol*, *Tasha* and *Jhanj*.





Madhya Pradesh

GANGAUR DANCE

The traditional festival of *Gangaur* is the most popular celebration of the Nimad region of Madhya Pradesh. Ceremonies related to the festival begin in the month of *Chaitra*, on the occasion of *Teej* and continue for nine days. The celebration is dedicated to Goddess *Parvati*, also known as *Gauri*. *Jhalaria* and *Mataki Mangaur* dances are performed to the accompaniment of rhythmic drumbeats. Symbolic idols and images of *Gauri* and *Shiva* (traditionally known as *Renu* and *Dhaniyar*), are placed side by side on a chariot. The dancers, holding hands, form a circle around the deity. Carrying the idols on their heads, they move rhythmically singing in chorus, invoking the blessings of the goddess for the well-being of their husbands. The songs are in praise of *Shiva-Parvati*, *Brahma-Savitri* and *Vishnu-Lakshmi*.



MATAKI DANCE

The *Mataki* dance is a special dance of the Malwa plateau of Madhya Pradesh, performed by women, on occasions like weddings and child birth. As very few dances are performed in this part of Madhya Pradesh, the dance is of great significance to the people of Malwa. Usually the *Mataki* dance is performed solo, but towards the end of the performance, other women dancers and

singers join the main dancer on stage. The dance is initiated by the lead dancer or *Zhella*. As the name of the dance implies, the women balance earthen pitchers or *matakis* on their heads, while dancing with graceful movements. The dance is an expression of joy and happiness. Dressed in colourful *lehengas* or *sarees* and wearing jewellery exclusive to





the region, the women always remain veiled, as is the tradition of the state. Sometimes the women balance several tiers of ornamental pots, while dancing to the beats of the *Dhol* and tunes of folk songs. One of the rhythms of the *Dhol* is called the *Mataki*, This dance is also known as the *Rajwadi Nritya*.

SAILA DANCE



The *Saila* dance is a popular dance form of the *Pando*, *Rajwar*, *Kaiwar* and *Gond* tribes of Dindori district. The *danda pata* or wooden sticks are the chief property of this dance. The dancers form a circle and strike one another's sticks. The name of the dance is derived from the word *saila*



meaning a hill. The tribal warriors of bygone days would roam the hills to protect the people. In the olden days the dance would be performed by wandering troupes during the period between October and June across the villages of the district. This practice has been discontinued over the years. The accompanying musical instruments are the *Madar*, *Godum*, *Toda Bansuri*, (vertical flute), *Algoza* (double flute) and *Chatkola* (wooden discs). A vigorous dance in which the dancers bend, shuffle, walk, skip and stamp their feet, increasing their tempo to match the beat of the drums.

RAEE

The *Raee* dance is popular in the Bundelkhand regions of Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh and is performed by the members of the *Bedni* community. This is a very old dance form and used to be performed as a celebratory dance to welcome victorious armed forces returning from war. The spirit of celebration is still evident in the dance presentation. Nowadays, the dance is presented all through the year, to celebrate the

onset of the harvesting season or any other happy occasion. The participants are primarily women, who have their faces veiled. The lead dancer, called the *Bedni* plays a pivotal role, as she gives the dance its tempo. The main themes of this aesthetic presentation are valour and love. The accompanying musical instruments are the *Algoza*, *Mridanga*, *Nagadiya*, *Manjira*, *Jhinka*, *Dholak*, *Ramtula* and *Dhapali*, and the footwork and body movements of the dance are synchronized to the rhythm of the music. The men wear *dhoti*, *pajama*, *kurta*, *angarkha* and turbans and the women are dressed in long *ghagras*, blouses and *chunris*.



BADHAI

Badhai is a lively and colourful folk dance form of the Bundelkhand region of the state, performed to thank Goddess *Shitala* for protecting the people from natural calamities and illnesses and to

express gratitude and seek blessings on happy occasions like weddings and childbirth. The musical instruments that include the *Dhol*, *Jhinka*, *Manjira* and





Lota create a rhythm called *Badhai*, from which this folk dance has acquired its name. In the past, animals would also participate in a *Badhai* performance and in many villages mares were seen as a part of the presentation. The men are attired in the simple *dhoti* and *kurta* and the women wear traditional *sarees*. Both men and women have handkerchiefs tied to their fingers, which add colour to the dance.

BAREDI DANCE

The *Baredi* folk dance is closely related to the cattle-farm culture of the country. The *Baredi* folk songs and dances are



presented during the fortnight beginning from *Diwali* (*Kartik Amavasya*) and ending on *Kartik Purnima*. Members of the *Ahir* community of Bundelkhand perform the *Baredi* dance during the harvesting season in praise of Lord *Krishna*. Wearing costumes embellished with small shells or *cowries* and adorning peacock feathers, they dance to the music of the *Manjira*, *Jhinka*, *Dholak* etc. The dancers are organized in groups of 8 to 10 performers each. One of the performers sings two lines from the poem called *Baredi* and the others present the vigorous *Baredi* dance. The dance has interesting geometric patterns and human pyramid formations. The main attraction of the dance is the *dhera*, a colourful rope circle formed by the dancers, which resembles a moving wheel. The theme is religious and the dance has an aesthetic appeal.

NAURATA DANCE

The *Naurata* dance is popular all over northern India – in Bundelkhand the special feature is that only unmarried girls participate. The dance is in praise of

Goddess *Durga* and performed during the *Navaratri* celebrations. The girls prepare a platform of mud and decorate it with herbal colours. They match intricate footwork and graceful movements to the story-based rhythmic songs, while carrying earthen pots with a lighted lamp in it. Wearing colourful *ghagras* and *chunris*, the girls dance with much enthusiasm, and pray for a suitable life partner. The accompanying musical instruments include the *Dhol* and *Manjira*.

THAPTI DANCE

The *Korkus* are a highly organized tribal community settled in Madhya Pradesh. During the season of shift cultivation, the *Korkus* make their work lighter by indulging in music and dance. The *Thapiti* dance is one of the main dances of this tribal community and is performed on all festive occasions. The male dancers wear a red feather, the *Kalagi* on their headgear – this is a



distinctive mark of their tribe. The women adorn themselves with garlands of shells and beads. The women hold the *chitkola* in one hand and a handkerchief in the other. The men hold a string of *ghoongrus* and *pancha*.

GUDUM BAJA

Gudum is a traditional instrument, popular among the *Dhulia* tribal



community of Dindori, Mandla and Shahdol districts. The *Gond* and *Baiga* tribal dances become more exciting when accompanied by the *Gudum*. *Gudum* players are important members of their tribal society and the *Gudum* is played at all important social occasions and religious festivities. The *Shehnai*, flute, *Manjira* and *Timki* are the instruments that accompany the music of the *Gudum*. The performance begins with the playing of the tune *Dagarchali*, followed by *Lavani*, *Daud*, *Gumak*, *Talband*, and *Lahaki* respectively.



Chhattisgarh





GAUR MARIA DANCE

One of the prominent performing art forms of the state, the *Gaur Maria* dance represents the rich cultural heritage of the region. The *Gaur Marias* of Abhujmar plateau of Bastar perform this dance of invocation and joy at wedding ceremonies. The dance appears to be a hunting dance, as many of the movements imitate those of animals. However, the dance also has a ritualistic approach. The distinctive feature of the attire of the male dancers is a colourful head dress with a pair of bison horns, crowned by a tall tuft of peacock and bird feathers, and strings of *cowrie* shells hanging from the edge to partially screen the face. The women wear a round flat hat stuck with feathers. The clothes of the women are simple but heavy ornaments are worn. The women form an inner

circle and the men form a great outer circle. The women beat sticks on the ground rhythmically, stamp their feet and have bending and turning movements. The men, who are the drummers, move in a fast tempo, often changing their steps.

PANDAVANI

Pandavani is a folk singing style of Chhattisgarh, with musical accompaniment, that narrates tales from the ancient Indian epic, the *Mahabharata*. *Pandavani* literally means stories and songs of the *Pandavas*. The origins of *Pandavani* are not known, but it could be as old as the *Mahabharata* itself. As few people could read in those days, this is how the stories were passed on from one generation to the next. It is an important part of our oral tradition, where ancient epics, anecdotes and



stories are recounted and re-enacted to educate and entertain the masses. Traditionally, *Pandavani* was performed exclusively by men. Since the 1980s, women also began to present *Pandavani*. The lead singer sings and enacts an episode from the epic, called *Prasang*, with an *Ektara* or *Tambura* decorated with small bells and peacock feathers, in one hand, and cymbals or *Kartal* in the other. During the performance, the *Tambura* becomes a prop, personifying *Bhima's gada* or mace, *Arjuna's* chariot or bow or even *Draupadi's* hair. There are no other stage props. The singer-narrator uses theatrical movements and breaks into a dance at the end of narrating an episode or to celebrate a victory. The *Harmonium*, *Dholak*, *Manjira* and *Tabla* are the accompanying musical instruments and there are 2 or 3 supporting singers who sing the refrain and provide the backing vocals. As the story progresses, the performance becomes more intense, with an increase in the dance movements. The performance can last for several hours.

There are two styles of narration – *Vedamati* and *Kapalik*. *Veda* loosely refers to a text, and in this style the narrator sits on the floor all through the presentation. In the *Kapalik* style the performer is free to improvise consistently on episodes and characters in the epic – all the scenes are actually enacted.

PANTHI DANCE

The *Panthi* dance, from Durg district, is representative of the dynamic and vibrant cultural life of Chhattisgarh. *Panthi* is a popular dance of the *Satnami* community of Chhattisgarh, performed in praise of their *guru*, *Ghasidas*, on the auspicious day of *Magh Purnima*. *Panthi* reflects the *Nirguna* philosophy, as the



Satnamis are not idol worshippers, are monotheists and believe that God is *Nirakar*. The dance is a reflection of the traditional legacies of the indigenous tribal groups of the region. The accompanying songs are about peace, detachment and the teachings of saint poets like *Kabir*, *Raidas*, *Dadu* etc. conveying the spirit of renunciation. The dance is performed around a *Jaithamb*, especially set up for the occasion and involves great balance and acrobatic skills. As the dance picks up tempo, the performers show complete dedication which is reflected in the flawless performance. The dancers wear white *dhotis*, waistbands and *ghungroos*. The *Mridang* and cymbals are the main accompanying musical instruments. The expressive body language of the dancers, the loud beats of the drums and the beautiful rhythmic folk songs cast a spell on the audience.

CHHATTISGARHI KARMA

Karma is a very popular celebratory dance, performed by the members of the

Gond tribe, residing in the northern part of Chhattisgarh. On *Ekadasi*, or the eleventh lunar day, in the month of *Bhado*, branches of the revered *Karma* tree are planted in the *angans* or courtyards of houses. On the following day, *navanna* or the new crop is offered to the deities. The *Karma* dance, which is performed to the mellifluous tunes of *Jhumer*, *Langda*, *Lakhaki*, *Thada* and *Ragini Karma* songs, is an integral part of the ritualistic offering of the *navanna*. The movements of the dancers change with the tunes of each of the songs – they sway to the rhythm of *Jhumer*, perform on one foot with the *Langda* songs and combine swaying and wave-like movements depicting the process of harvesting with *Lakhaki* songs. The dancers always stand while singing the *Thada* songs. *Ragini*, as the name implies is based on *ragas* and *raginis*. The dancers are attractively attired, embellishing their costumes with traditional accessories. They wear armlets made of small shells or *cowries* and stick peacock feathers in their headgear. The musical accompaniment is provided by the *Dholak*, *Nagara*, *Mandaretc.*





SARHUL DANCE

The *Sarhul* dance is performed by the *Oraon* tribe of *Jaspur tehsil* in Raigarh district of Chhattisgarh. The *Oraons* believe that Lord *Shankara* and other gods reside in the *Sal* tree and so this dance is performed around the *Sal* tree, on the auspicious day of *Chaitra Purnima*. Boys and girls, men and women, of all ages, take part in the *Sarhul* dance. The movements of the dancers are based more on the flow of the song than on the drums. The drummer wears a waistband of peacock feathers. The dance begins in a slow pace and gradually picks up tempo, ending in divine ecstasy. The men wear handloom *dhotis* and the women wear handloom *sarees* known as *saruha kichari*.



GENDI

Chhattisgarh is home to some of the oldest tribal communities of the country,

who have, over the years, retained their passion for music and dance. The members of the *Maria Gond* tribal community of Bastar are born dancers and dance is an integral part of all their social and festive occasions. One exciting dance in their repertoire is the *Gendi* dance or Stilt dance. The dancers execute difficult and creative footwork while balancing on stilts. The dance is performed between the months of June and August by the young men of the community. The dancers wear belts studded with small shells or *cowries* and tie the musical instrument, the *Seeng*

Baja, around their waists. The other accompanying musical instruments are the *Mandar*, *Shehnai*, *Chatkula*, *Duff*, *Timki* and flute.

KAKSAR

Over one-third of the state population of Chhattisgarh belongs to the tribal communities, each having their own distinct traditions, customs and lifestyle.



The *Kaksar* dance, of the *Abhujmadia* tribe of Bastar, is a festival dance, performed to invoke *Kaksar*, the deity who presides over harvest and rain. It is performed during the *Jatra Parva* in the month of May to welcome the rainy season. The female dancers wear yellow *sarees* with red blouses and adorn their hair with sea shells. The male dancers wear long skirts with *kurtas* having a red border.



The headgear is a broad white belt known as *chimti*, which is decorated with coral shells. An interesting aspect of the dance is the use of tinkling bells of different sizes tied to the waists of the male dancers. The tinkle of the bells adds a magical and soothing effect to the accompanying music. The dancers move from one village to another, performing the dance.





*Andhra
Pradesh*

VEERNATYAM DANCE



The *Veernatyam* dance, also called the *Veerangam* or *Veerabhadra Nrityam*, is a very old dance form of Andhra Pradesh, which has a lot of religious significance attached to it. *Veera* means brave, and as the name of the dance suggests, it is a dance of the brave. The *Veernatyam* is performed by the *Veeramusti* community, now known as the *Veerabhadriya* community, who claim to be descendants of *Veerabhadra*. According to Indian mythology, Lord *Shiva*, the god of destruction, was once outraged by the humiliation met by his consort, *Sati Devi*. He created *Veerabhadra* from a strand of hair of his *jatajut*, or matted hair. *Veerabhadra* took up the fierce form of *Pralayankar* and destroyed the

Dakshayagna Vatika, where the function was being held. *Draksharama*, in east Godavari, is believed to be the place of the

Daksha Vatika and the birth of *Veerabhadra*. The dance is performed to the accompaniment of the *Tambura*, *Soolam*, *Dolu*, *Tasha* and *Veeranam*, or war drum. The first stage of the dance is holding the *Veerabhadra Pallem*, a huge plate, bearing a camphor fire. The dancers dance vigorously to the accompaniment of percussion instruments till the fire is extinguished. In the second stage, the

dancers perform holding a long pole marked with *Bibhuti* or sacred ash, with bells tied to the top, representing the *Dhwaja Stambha* of *Shiva*. In the third



stage, the dancers perform with spears and tridents. Initially performed only at *Shiva* temples, it is now a popular art form of the state.

GARAGALU

The *Garagalu* dance is performed by the tribal communities living in the Krishna district. During village and temple festivals, the dancers, dressed in colourful attire, balance vessels decorated with flowers on their heads and perform to the tune of the *Nagaswaram* and the rhythm of the *Thavil*. The dance also includes some eye-catching acrobatics



BURRA KATHA



Burra Katha, also known as *Jangam Katha*, is a unique folk art form of the state. *Burra Katha*

is the tradition of story-telling to a big crowd. The use of the musical instrument *Burra* gives the art form its name. This art has possibly evolved from the traditional *Tandana Katha*, and is used to educate, entertain and provide relaxation to the rural folk. In this art form, the main performer, the *Kathakudu* or storyteller, recites a tale from Indian mythology, plays the music and also dances to the music. He is dressed in a long *angaraksha*, turban with a crest feather, tight *pajama* or *dhoti*, a colourful waistband and bells on



his knees. He holds the *Tambura* or *Sitar* and *Andelu* and a handkerchief. His two assistants, called the *Vantalu*, are similarly dressed and play the instruments like *Barralu* or *Budigalu*. In the *Burra Katha*, the story teller constantly addresses his co-artistes. Drummers stand on either side, with the *Rajkiya*, who enhances the social and political commentary, on the right, and the clown for comic relief on the left. The performance of *Burra Katha* requires the performer to have both oratory and dancing skills.

BUTTA BOMMALU



Butta Bommalu is a very popular religious dance in west Godavari's Tanaku region, performed during temple and village festivals. The performance starts with the dancer getting into a large puppet, about eight feet tall and three feet in radius, and moving to the rhythm of four *Dappus*. The performance is held in the open because of the large size of the puppet. The puppet is hollow at the bottom, and the performer gets into it through this cavity.

The puppet is tied to the performer's shoulders and waist. The puppets are made with bright colours and look very attractive during the performance. Sometimes, the dancers just wear masks portraying different characters and perform delicate movements to the accompaniment of non-verbal music.

PULIVESHAM

The *Pulivesham*, a popular dance form of Andhra Pradesh, is performed during *Dusserah* and other festivals. *Pulivesham* means donning the garb of a tiger. In this



performance, the dancer paints his entire body with black and yellow stripes to resemble a tiger's coat and also wears a mask and a tail to complete the *vesham* or garb. The performer mimics the gait and gestures of the tiger, making it very enjoyable for children.

KARRA SAMU

The men of the *Dommari* community perform the martial art form of *Karra Samu*. The men learnt the art of *Karra Samu* for the purpose of self defense against robbers and bandits and to protect the village against intruders. This art form has now been transformed into an aesthetic dance presentation, performed at temple festivals and marriage ceremonies. Wearing the traditional *dhoti* and turbans, the dancers perform to the beats of the *Dappu* and *Tasha*, displaying great skill and agility.

KATHI SAMU



Kathi Samu is another martial art skill, mastered by the royal armies of yesteryear. The art is nowadays displayed solely for recreational purposes, by the descendants of those who were in the service of royal armies. Some of the present exponents continue to teach some interested students this art, which uses different kinds of swords and shields, in order to keep it alive. Besides the long curved sword, they also use a *limcha*, which used to be used in wars and the *pata*, a sword with a wooden cover. A shield or a horn is used for defense – in ancient times, the commanders used shields and the ordinary soldiers used horns. This display of swift sword fights has been mastered by the men of the *Dommari* community.

TAPPETA GULLU



The *Tapetta Gullu*, popular in the districts of Vizianagaram and Srikakulam, is a devotional dance performed to propitiate the goddess of rains, *Gangamma*. This ritualistic dance is performed by the *Yadava* community of cowherds and shepherds. The dance is a very popular procession dance and is also performed during the festivals of other village gods and goddesses. *Gangamma* is propitiated from *Bhishma Ekadasi* to the end of *Baisakh*.

The entire village participates in the festivities. The men wear white dhotis with red shirts and a turban and the women wear their traditional finery. The dance has tempo, rhythm and vigour. The dancers have drums, called the *Tappeta Gundu* hanging from their necks, on which they produce the different beats for their dance.





Telengana



MATHURI DANCE

The *Mathuri* dance, also called the *Koppu* dance, is performed by the *Mathuri* tribe,



inhabitants of the Umji and Indravelli forest areas of Utnoor *tehsil* in Adilabad district. It is believed that the *Mathuri* tribe came from Mathura, and hence they are so named. Traditionally performed during *Krishnashtami* celebrations, the themes of the dance are taken mainly from the *Ramayana*. Men and women participate in the dance, but the pace is different for both. Women dance in slow rhythmic movements, while the men dance at a more

vigorous pace. The women form the inner circle and the men the outer semi-circle. The dancers wear colourful costumes, and the men hold a handkerchief and a stick in their hands. The men strike the small sticks and the women clap to mark the time. The *Nagara* is the main musical accompaniment, the other instruments being the *Sutta*, *Dappu* etc.

LAMBADI KUNITHA

Lambadi is a special dance of Telengana, which originated at Anupu village, near Nagargunakonda. Women of the semi-nomadic *Senegalese* and *Banjara* tribes perform the dance. Though the women



are the main performers, the male drummers sometimes join in to bring a rhythmic element into the performance. Bedecked in colourful sarees embellished with mirrors and sequins and heavy traditional tribal jewellery, the women move rhythmically, the pace gradually gaining momentum. Farming activities like sowing of seeds and harvesting are aesthetically depicted in the dance.

GUSSADI DANCE

The *Rajgonds* are a unique tribal community of the Adilabad district. Their festivals are a reflection of their lifestyles and cultural traditions. Singing and dancing are an integral part of all their festivities. The *Gussadi* dance, one of the most magnificent dances of the *Gond* community, is performed in memory of their Guru, *Ethmosnrpess*. Performed during the period between *Dusserah* and *Diwali*, wearing a special costume known as



Gussadi, the young performers abide by very high principles during the entire period of fifteen days, and perform with single minded devotion.

DHIMSA

The *Dhimsa* is the dance of the young and the old, men and women, of the *Valmiki*,



Bagata, *Khond* and *Kotia* tribes living in Araku valley, in the hilly tracts of Vishakapatnam district. During festivals, dancers of one village visit other villages to participate in the festivities, thereby forging friendships and fraternity between the people of the different villages. The dance is also performed on full-moon nights and at wedding ceremonies. For four days, before and after the full-moon, the nights reverberate to the sound of the *Dholak* and *Dhimsa* songs. The women attired in typical tribal costumes of red sarees, feathers adorning their hair and ornaments, dance to the tune of the *Mori*, *Kiridi*, *Tudumu*, *Dappu* and

Jodukommulu. *Dhimsa* has branched off into eight different categories of dances. *Boda Dhimsa* is a prayer dance in honour of the village goddess. In *Gunderi Dhimsa* or *Usku Dhimsa*, the male dancer, while singing invites the women to dance with him. In *Goddi Beta Dhimsa*, the dancers bend forward, rise with a swing and move about 25 steps and return in the same manner 4 or 5 times. *Potar-Tola Dhimsa* is symbolic of the picking of leaves. *Bhag Dhimsa* describes how to escape from an attack by a tiger. *Natikari Dhimsa* is a solo recital of the *Valkmiki* tribe, performed at *Diwali*. In *Kunda Dhimsa*, the dancers push each other with their shoulders, while swinging rhythmically. *Baya Dhimsa* is the dance of the tribal magician, when he is possessed by the village goddess. All the dances amplify the lifestyles and cultural heritage of the tribal communities of Vishakapatnam.

BATHAKAMMA

Bathakammas are performed in Telengana during the *Bathakamma* festival, by women. In the month-long festival, Goddess *Bathakamma* is worshipped and the idol is taken to rivers and lakes and floated in the evenings. The *Bathakamma* dance is performed in



front of the idol, particularly by newly married women, who pray with great devotion for peace and success in their married lives. According to a popular legend, *Saijanbai*, the beautiful daughter of a *Rajput* king was sent back to her father's house, by her husband's family, soon after her marriage, due to her inability to perform household duties properly. She worshipped *Bathakamma*, and with her blessings, she returned to her marital home and received acceptance. Since then, young married girls pray to the goddess, seeking happiness in their married lives.

KOLATTAM DANCE

A *kola* is a stick the length of an arm, and *Kolattam* is the dance performed with two *kolas*. The *Kolattam* is also known as the *Kolannalu* or *Kolkolannalu*. When the sticks are struck together they produce a rhythmic sound, and this is used to maintain the rhythm of the dance, when the dancers are in motion. The dance is performed by the entire community, irrespective of age, on the occasion of *Ram Navami*. The *kolas* are made in such a way, that they are stout at one end and gradually become thin towards the other. The stout ends are held in the hands of the dancers and the thin ends are beaten against one another to produce the rhythmic sound. The dance is performed in a circular formation, with the expert *Guru* or teacher standing at the centre of



dancers balance pots called *bonalus* on their heads while performing the *dance*. Male dancers called *Potharajus* precede the female dancers, lashing whips and strewing *neem* leaves, adding colour to the

the circle. The teacher sings the lines of the song, which are repeated by the dancers, to the beating of the *kolas*, and the execution of a variety of movements, like turning around and moving forward. There are usually two concentric circles—the inner circle receives the strikes while the outer circle delivers them. This rural art form is a popular feature of all village festivals. *Kolattam* is a beautiful blend of music, singing and rhythmic movements.

festivity. The name of the dance originates from *Bhojanalu*, meaning food—the significance being the offering of food to the goddess, made by the women of the community, who later share it with their families. The male performers, wearing turmeric coloured *dhotis*, a *dhatti* around the waist, garlands and *kumkum* marks on their forehead, sway to the beats of the *Dappu* and *Ghatam*.

BONALU

The folk festival of *Bonalu* in Telengana, is a celebration, in which young women dressed in colourful clothes, dance to rhythmic beats, in praise of the village deity *Mahankali*. *Bonalu* is celebrated in the Indian month of *Ashada*. The

DAPPULU

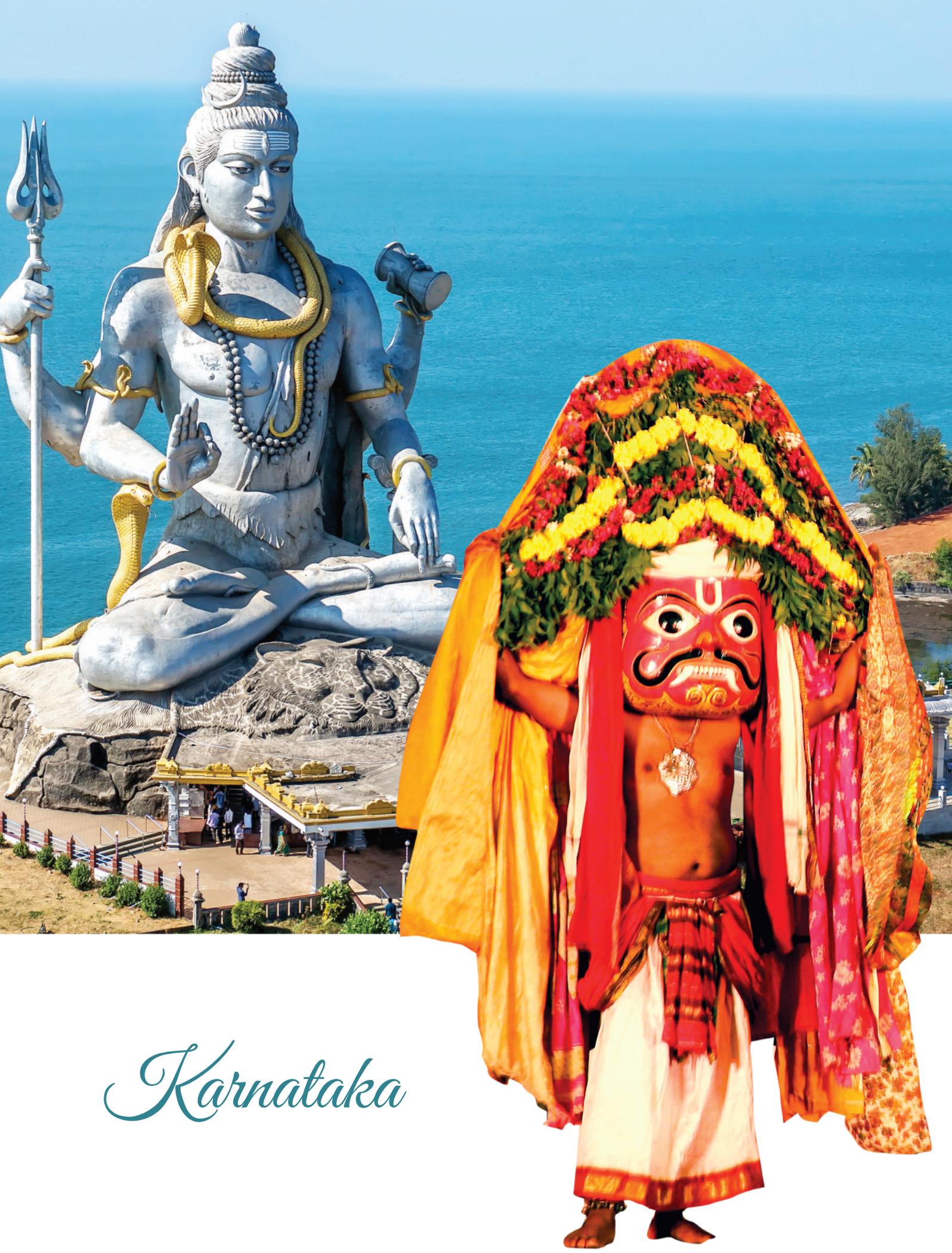
The *Dappulu* dance gets its name from the *Dappu*, a hand held, round shaped drum, made of wood and covered with goat leather. In the *Dappulu* dance, a group of 15 to 20 performers carry the *Dappu* on their shoulders, rhythmically





beating them with sticks. The dancers, wearing *dhotis* and coloured shirts, wear heavy anklets, which make a sweet musical sound, enhancing the rhythms of the beating of the *Dappu*. The *Dappulu* dance is performed at fairs, festivals, weddings and even funerals. In Telengana, the *Dappulu* dancers are always invited to lead important processions. The dance is performed by the male members of the farming communities of the state.





Karnataka



skill. On days of festivals, or on special occasions, the dancers perform the dance to fulfill their vows. The dance is usually performed in front of the temple of *Gram Devi*.

GORWARA KUNITHA

The *Gorwara Kunitha*, a ritualistic and celebratory dance, is performed by the *Gorwara* tribesmen in honour of their god *Mylaralinga*. It is performed at the festival of *Mylaralinga*, held at the *Shaivite* centre of *Mylara* in the northern part of the state. The performers adorn a fur cap of bear's skin and wear a shirt called *niluwangi*. They carry a woolen rug or *ghavar*, a bell or *ghanta*, a cane or *chadi* and the *Damaru* and *Trishul* of Lord *Shiva*. The musical accompaniment for this highly rhythmic dance is provided by the *Kalalu*, *Damaru*, *Damadi* and *Taala*.

POOJA KUNITHA

The *Pooja Kunitha* is a ritualistic dance, performed to propitiate *Shakti Devata* on the occasion of *Gram Devata Utsav*, by the *Harijan* communities of *Timkur* district. A frame is made of bamboo and covered with beautiful *sarees*. At the centre of the frame, the face of the goddess, made of copper or any other metal is seen. The dancer carries the frame on his head, which requires great



DOLLU KUNITHA

The shepherd communities of Karnataka have rich cultural traditions. The *Dollu Kunitha* of the shepherds or *Kurabas* is an extremely popular dance form of the state. The dance is known for its powerful drumming, vigorous dancing and



acrobatic elements. The dance, which has widespread popularity in southern, northern and eastern regions of Karnataka, is performed by both men and women, but separately. The performers form a semi-circle and the beat of the dance is controlled and directed with cymbals by a leader who is positioned in the centre. Slow and fast rhythms alternate, and the dancers, during the course of the performance, make attractive synchronized group formations of different kinds. The dance demonstrates both spectacular variety and complexity of skills. The high pitch of *Tala*, *Tappadi*, trumpets, gong and flute

reinforce the rich vibrations of the *Dollu Kunitha* dance.

According to the legend of *Halumatha Purana* or *Kuruba Purana*, the demon *Dolla Asura* worshipped *Shiva* with great devotion. *Shiva* appeared before him and *Dolla* could ask for a boon. *Dolla* requests for immortality but *Shiva* refuses. The

enraged *Dolla* swallows *Shiva* - *Shiva* starts growing big causing immense pain to *Dolla*. *Dolla* requests *Shiva* to come out. *Shiva* tears open the demon's body to come out, thereby killing him. *Shiva* used the skin of *Dolla* to make the *Dollu* and gave it to his devotees, the *Halu Karubas*.

In *Beereshwara* temples, the *Dollu* is hung by means of a thick thread tied to hooks in the ceiling. Every time worship is offered to *Beereshwara*, there

should be an instantaneous beating of the *Dollu*.

SOMANA KUNITHA

The *Somana Kunitha* is dedicated to the soldiers or bodyguards of the *Gram Devata* or village gods like *Karlyanna*, *Kenchanna*, *Dutharaya* and *Bhootappa*. The deity usually has two bodyguards, the yellow and red Somas called *Kencharaya* and *Kemparya*. This ancient dance form is generally performed by the



smaller communities like the *Okalaya*, *Lingayat*, *Nayaka*, *Besta* and *Kuruba*. The main attraction of the dance is the mask made from the bark of the *Bhootale* tree, painted in vivid colours and draped in ten *sarees*. The Soma is carried with great devotion by the chosen dancer, who performs like one possessed by the *Devi*. The villagers have great faith in this dance and make offerings to the dancers. The dance uses many unique musical instruments and is performed at village fairs and festivals. About 10 to 15 artistes wear colourful costumes and enact the roles of various gods and goddesses.

SUGGI KUNITHA

The *Suggi Kunitha* has been perfected by the *Halaki Vokkaligas*. The *Suggi* is taken

out on the occasion of *Kamana Hunnima*. The performers of *Suggi* are mostly farmers. The headgear for this performance, called *Tura*, is very interesting - it resembles a bird perching on crop. The performers also have a small stick in one hand and a brush made of peacock feathers in the other. The *Suggi* dancers move in a procession, singing



and dancing, and visit the different houses, where they are greeted with a traditional *Aarti*. After the procession returns, *Kama* is burnt - and this is followed by festivities. The *Suggi* procession is believed to eradicate diseases in the village, bring rains and fulfill the wishes of the people.

BESSU KAMSALE



LAMBANI KUNITHA

Some tribal communities of Rajasthan have settled in Karnaka, among them the *Lambanis*, a community of very hard working people. They present their dances, known for its footwork and complex body movements, at fairs and on festive occasions.

PATADA KUNITHA

The *Patada Kunitha* is a vanishing art form, which used to be performed during the *Darnuka Utsav*, *Dusserah*, and to celebrate a good harvesting season. The performers hold flags and long sticks in their hands and dance according to the rhythmic patterns provided by the *Tamate*, *Dhol* and *Nagari*. The long sticks are bamboo pieces, about 15 feet long and decorated with cloth of varying colours, which are used as flag poles. The dancers keep changing their steps to the change in rhythm of the music. About 10 to 20 performers take part in this lively dance.

Kamsale is a simple metallic instrument, which produces a rhythmic sound and is used to accompany the singing and dancing in this performance. The instrument comprises a cymbal and a bronze disc, which produces a rhythmic clang which blends with the melodious music of the *Mahadeshwara* epic. The instruments, in the course of vigorous rhythmic beatings, are moved around the body of the dancers in different patterns, showcasing both skill and artistry. *Kamsale* is closely associated with the worship of Lord *Shiva*. Artistes who vow to devote their lives to the worship of *Mahadeshwara* are supposed to perform *Kamsale*. The dance is a part of *Diksha*, or oath-taking ceremony, and, is generally taught by the teacher or spiritual head. A stage performance usually has three singers, who sing in praise of Lord *Shiva* and his devotees. They are followers of *Male Mahadeshwara*, mostly found in Mysore and Mandya districts. Being ritualistic in nature, it is performed on religious occasions like *Shivaratri*, *Navaratri* and *Mahadeshwara Jatra*. They sing



melodious devotional songs, particularly on moonlit nights.

YAKSHAGANA

The *Yakshagana* is an elaborate form of dance drama performance that incorporates music, singing, dancing, theatre and colourful costumes, prevalent in the coastal belt of Karnataka. *Yaksha* means celestial, and *Gana* is music – in *Yakshagana*, to the accompaniment of loud singing and drumming a spiritual world unfolds before the audience. Open areas, like the village paddy

fields, after the winter crop has been harvested, are generally used for *Yakshagana* performances, which can sometimes continue for the entire night.





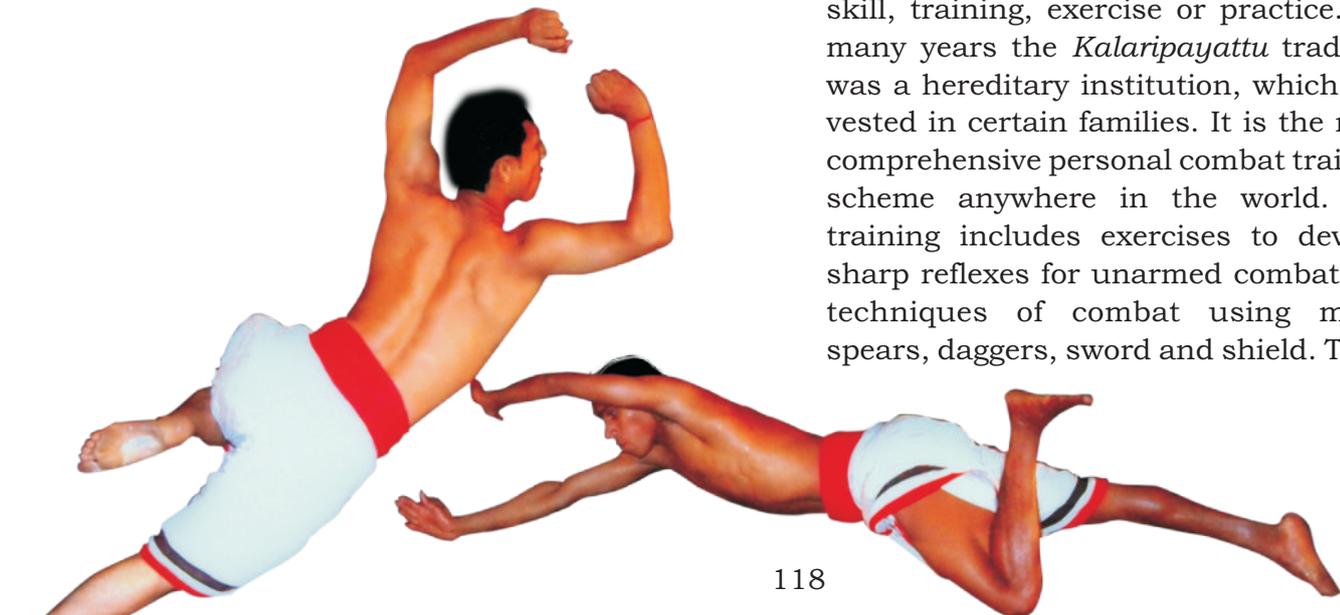
Kerala



KALARIPAYATTU

Kalaripayattu is an exclusive martial arts legacy of Kerala, based on *Dhanurvedic Samhita*. It is an integral part of the *Malayali* culture and also a *Tamil* or *Dravidian* tradition, dating back to early *Sangam* culture. It is a highly developed, scientifically arranged, psycho-

physiological system of training that teaches techniques of combat. The training includes a well-graded series of exercises for attaining maximum physical agility. The literal meaning of *Kalaripayattu* is 'acquired skill' of art. The word *Kalari* is derived from the Sanskrit word *Khallowrke*, meaning a military training ground and *Payat* is skill, training, exercise or practice. For many years the *Kalaripayattu* tradition was a hereditary institution, which was vested in certain families. It is the most comprehensive personal combat training scheme anywhere in the world. The training includes exercises to develop sharp reflexes for unarmed combat and techniques of combat using mace, spears, daggers, sword and shield. There



is also a unique Kerala weapon – the lethal flexible sword, called *Urumi*, which can be concealed as a waist belt. Goddess *Bhagavati* is the guardian deity of the *Kalaris*. The art of *Kalaripayattu* was taken to China by the Buddhist monks. It has now become the fabled model for modern martial arts.

THEYYAM

Theyyam, the *Dance of the Gods*, also known as *Kaliyattam*, is an age-old socio-religious ceremony of Kerala. As the name suggests, *Kaliyattam* is a sacred dance performed for Goddess *Kali* (Goddess *Shakti*) - it is sometimes called *Therayattom* since every *thera* or village was bound to perform it. Every year, from December to April, temple courtyards and open spaces in Kannur and Kasaragod in northern Kerala come alive with *Theyyam*. Every day, at the break of

dawn, large crowds collect, seeking blessings in the form of turmeric powder, in return of offerings such as rice grains. In ancient times, every village or *thera* had its own shrine called *Kavu* and it was imperative to have a *Kaliyattam* performed before it. About 450 forms of *Theyyam* are known, and each has its own myth, choreography, costume and songs. Of these *Devakooth* is the only *Theyyam* performed by women. The dancers wear flamboyant red clothes, huge headgear and heavy make-up to resemble the gods and goddesses. An additional silver eye mask with a tiny pinhole is worn by the performer playing the role of goddess *Muchilottu Bhagavathi*, the most revered deity of the state. The accompanying musical instruments are the *Chenda*, *Tuti*, *Kurumkuzhal*, *Elathalam* and *Veekni*. *Theyyam* combines dance, drama, music and mime in the presentation and the twirls, jumps and acrobatic stunts



inspire awe and reverence in the audience.

DHAFMUTTU KALI

The *Dhafmuttu Kali* is a group dance of the *Parayas* of Maippuram district, in which the dancers strike rhythms on a small drum. The dance is vigorous and powerful and reaches a crescendo of rhythmic fervor, with the dancers swirling on their feet and at the same time striking the drum in perfect synchronization.



rights for this performance, and they have been performing it for generations. The dance is a recreation of the battle scene of *Kurukshetra*, with the dancers representing the *Kauravas* and wooden effigies that have been created, representing the *Pandavas*. The dancers recreate the battle scene through skilful wielding of the sticks and shields, to the accompaniment of trumpets, kettle-drums and war cries. The dance reiterates the victory of good over evil.



VELAKALI DANCE

The origin of the *Velakali* dance is in martial practices, though the dance subsequently acquired some religious overtones. Traditionally, the performance takes place during the *Phalguni* festival, celebrated in March or April. The Nair family has exclusive

OPPANA DANCE

The *Oppana* dance is a special dance of the Muslim girls of north Kerala and the Lakshadweep Islands, performed as a part of wedding ceremonies. There are separate dances for the bride and the groom, who are mentally prepared for marriage and the nuptial night by their close friends and relatives, through



singing and dancing. A wedding is always a time for celebration and merriment, and so everyone comes dressed in their finery, and participates in the ritual with much enthusiasm.

GARUDA PARVA DANCE

The *Garuda Parva* dance is performed in *Vaikom, Udayanapuram, Vadayar, Elankavu, Moothedath Kavu, Mankompu,*



Alleppey, Brahmamangalam, Trippunithura and some other temples where the deity *Bhadrakali* is installed. The origin of this art form is not known. Two or three dancers, known as the *Thookakaran*, wear the garb of *Garuda*, the *vahan* of Lord *Vishnu*, and dance to the rhythm of percussion instruments. The dancers imitate the bird, by preening their feathers with their beaks, carrying snakes in their beaks and dancing joyfully with their wings spread. Various episodes from the *Garuda Puran* form the theme of this dance. The *Chenda, Maddala*, cymbals and horns are the accompanying musical instruments.

KANNIYARKALI

The *Kanniyarkali* is an ancient dance form that dates back to 150 years. It is traditionally performed once a year, during the *Vishu* festival, in front of the *Bhagavathi* temples. The performance of

this well-known folk dance is divided into different segments – *vedan*, *kodanky*, *vadithallu* etc. This all-embracing art form is witnessed by the entire village, irrespective of caste, creed or social status. The dancers, dressed in colourful costumes and carrying sticks, sway to the beats of *Chenda*, *Elathalam*, *Mathalam*, and *Chengala*.



PADAYANI

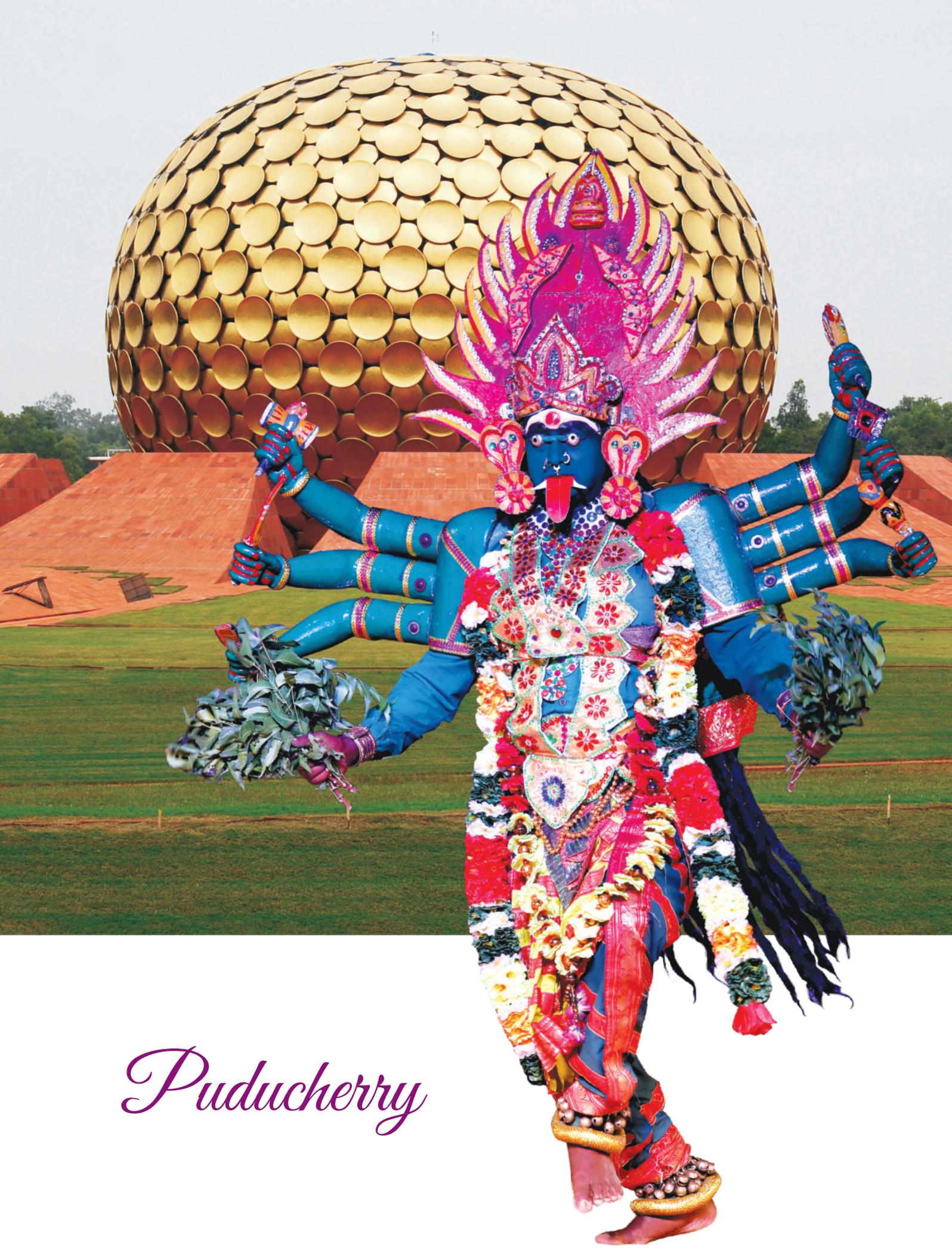
The *Padayani*, a folk art form, traditionally performed by the Nair community, is associated with festivals of certain temples of southern Kerala. The word *Padayani*, or its colloquial version *Padeni*, means military formations or rows of army. However, this dance does not have any military or martial connections. In *Padayani*, the performers impersonate a number of divine and semi-divine characters by wearing large masks of different shapes, known as *kolams*. The singers sing a different song for each *kolam*, and the instrumentalists provide the music of the *Thappu* and cymbals. A typical *Padayani* performance depicts the procession of Kali and her spirits as they return after killing the *Asura* chief, *Draika*. Though the dance has its roots in religion and ritual, today the presentation has a secular appeal.



KUMMATI



Kummati is an all-male ritualistic dance performed to seek blessings of the goddess. The dancers perform to the beat of drums and the music of the *Villu*. The leader of the group, known as the *Thallakummatti* wields and maneuvers a baton known as the *kummattikkol*. The spectators join the performance by wearing the masks of different gods and standing by all through the performance.



Puducherry



GARADI

The *Garadi* dance traces its origin to the mythological epic, the *Ramayana*. It is believed that the *Vanaras* (monkeys) performed this dance after the Battle of *Lanka* to celebrate the victory of *Rama* over *Ravana*. Performed during all festivals, a *Garadi* performance can stretch for long durations and continue for five to eight hours. Disguised as *Vanaras*, the dancers carry sticks in their hands, and dance to the beat of two big drums, each eight feet in diameter, called

Rama Dolu. A distinctive feature of this dance, are the iron rings, called *Anjali*, worn by the dancers on each leg. As the dancers execute the movements, the ten rings worn on each leg produce a sweet and melodious sound.



VEERAYEE NATANAM DANCE

Veerayee Natanam dance is performed in memory of the bravery shown by *Veerayee*, a fearless woman who lived in Thondaimandalam, a beautiful landscape that spreads between the river Thenpennai and river Paalaru and from the Eastern Ghat to the Bay of Bengal. *Veerayee* drove away a tiger using a *Muram*, a small spade made of bamboo plates. *Veerayee Natanam* is performed in most parts of Puducherry.

the cattle for grazing, he quenched his thirst with the blood of a bullock. This angered *Nambudiri* so much that he cut up *Pookutichathan* into 390 pieces and thereafter performed a *Homa*, a ritualistic fire. According to popular myth hundreds of *Chathans* were born from that *Homa* and *Pookutichathan* was one of them. While performing this dance the dancers wear attractive costumes and jewellery with facial drawings. This very attractive ritualistic dance from Mahe in Puducherry is extremely popular among all sections of people of Puducherry.

THIRAYATTAM

Attam in Tamil means a dance. It is believed that *Pookutichathan* was born to Lord *Shiva* and Goddess *Parvati* during their incarnation as *Valluvas*. Lord *Shiva* presented the baby to *Kalakot Nambudiri*, who had been praying for a child. *Pookutichathan* grew up to be a very naughty child. Once when he took

KALIATTAM

Kaliattam is a dance performed to propitiate Goddess *Kali*. Performed in March, to celebrate the annual festival of the presiding deity, *Angala Parameswari*, the dance depicts *Shakti*, in the form of Goddess *Kali* destroying the *Rakshasas*. The accompanying percussion instruments are the *Thappattai*, *Pambai*



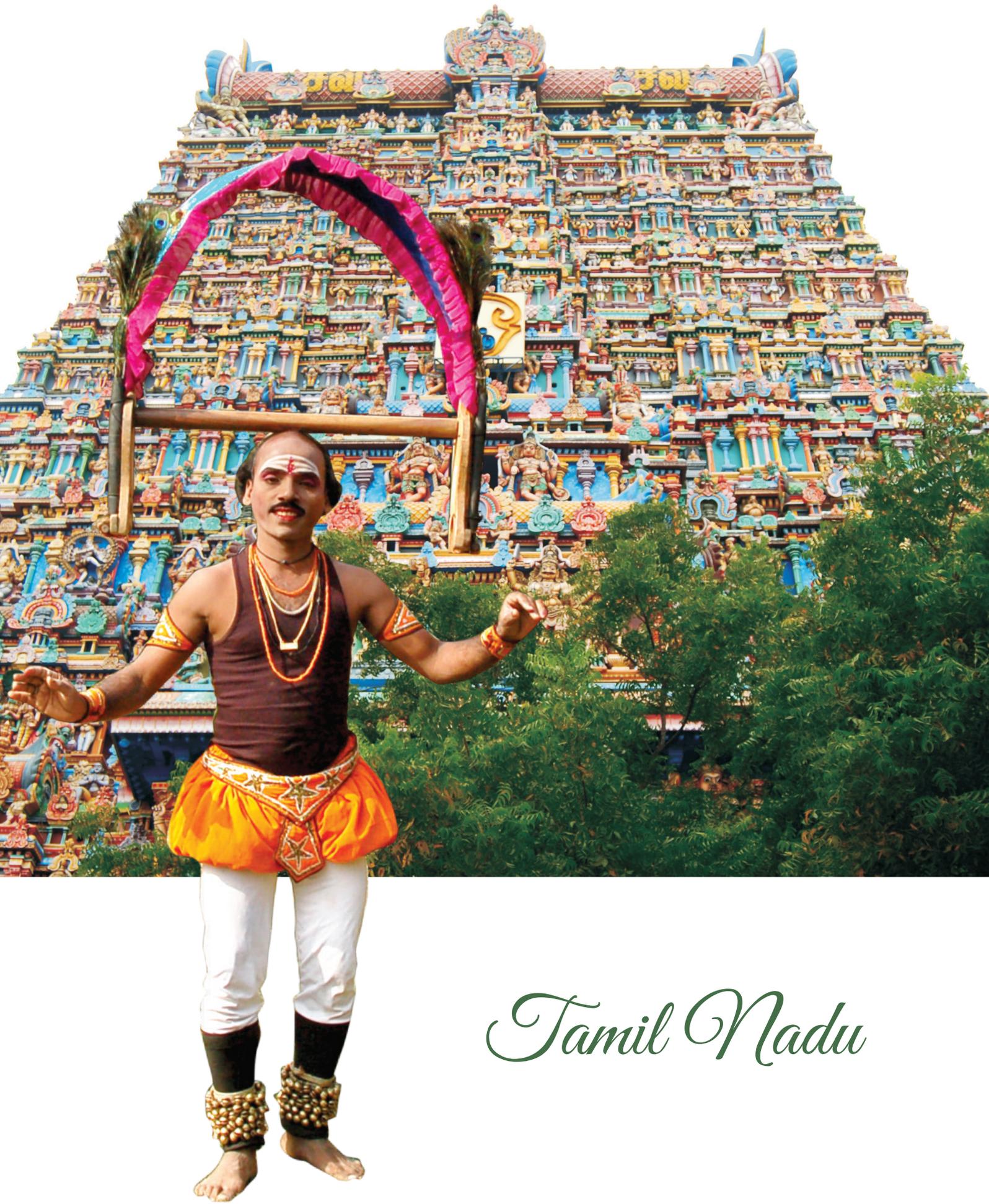


and *Udukkai*. The *Kaliattam* is also called the *Mayana Kolaivizha* or the Graveyard Festival.

MASQUERADE

Masquerade is a traditional festival celebrated in Puducherry, just prior to the beginning of the Christian period of Lent, before Easter. In this all-male dance, men and sometimes also children, wearing masks of animals, devils and humans, dance on the streets, asking passersby for alms. If they do not oblige, the dancers rub their oily hands on their clothes. A lot of money is collected by the group of performers which they utilize for merry-making on Easter Sunday. Masquerade was a very common practice during the French period in Puducherry, but is gradually dying out.





Tamil Nadu



KARAGAATTAM

Karagaattam or *Karagam* is a folk dance of Tamil Nadu which originated as a ritual dedicated to *Mariamman*, the goddess of health and rain. The *Karagam* dance is very popular in Tamil Nadu, Poducherry, Andhra Pradesh (Garagalu) and Karnataka (Karaga). The goddess is also the protector from the dreaded diseases like small pox, cholera etc. This ritual is performed in the month of August when the idol of *Mariamman* is carried in procession. The ritualistic pot, filled with water and adorned with decorations several feet high, is carried by the priests. The dancers perform various acrobatic feats while following the procession, accompanied by a number of musical

instruments like *Thavil*, *Nadaswaram*, *Muni*, *Udukkai* and *Pambais*. The performers, donning colourful costumes, carry decorated and vertically piled vessels on their heads and dance in a lively manner to the tune of the *Nadaswaram* and the rhythm of the *Thavil*. It is popular in villages during temple festivals. The dance is often presented along with other folk dances like *Mayilaattam*, basing itself on folk tunes like *Kummi*, *Kilikkanni*, *Pavalak Kodi* etc.



KAVADI AATTAM



The *Kavadi Attam* is performed to invoke the blessings of the folk deity, *Muruga*. This ancient dance was supposed to have been performed by a giant named *Idumban*, with a pole slung across his shoulders. At the two ends of the pole he carried the two favourite hillocks of *Muruga*. The dancers balance the *Kavadi* on their shoulders – which is a short beam that has offerings of flowers,

sandalwood paste, milk, curd etc --there are several kinds of *Kavadis*. The carrying of the *Kavadi* by the pilgrims is symbolic of *Idumban* carrying the pole with the hillocks on either side of the pole. Under the spell of the hypnotic music provided by the *Nadaswaram* and *Thavil*, the devotees proceed to the shrine by singing the song '*Kavadi Chindu*' and moving with quick and vigorous movements. The *Kavadi* is never touched by the dancer's body while dancing, and this requires great dexterity on the part of the performer.

KOKALI KATTAI AATTAM

The *Kokali Kattai Aattam*, is a dance on stilts, performed mainly in the rural belt of the state. Earlier, the dance was confined to the Vellore and Wallahjapet regions and would be performed as a part of temple festivities. It has now evolved into a popular folk art form of the state.



The dancers dance on stilts, whose height varies from 60 cm to 150 cm – as these stilts resemble the legs of an egret, the dance has been named after the bird. This is a group performance, in which the dancers are usually in even numbers. The dancers wear pants of uniform colour, with multi-hued bands tied around their waists. They wave multi-coloured handkerchiefs or brightly painted wands as they present their varied movements. A toy parrot perches on the shoulders of each dancer.

KUMMI

The *Kummi* dance is performed by the women of all communities of the state. The term *Kummi* comes from the word *Kummai*, meaning to dance while clapping one's hands in rhythm to tunes of popular songs. The dance, based on different activities performed in the fields for agricultural purposes, was originally performed during *Maariamman* and *Kaanum Pongal* festivals, for ten consecutive days. The dance is also performed on various social occasions. Depending on the manner of clapping, there are several variations of the *Kummi*.

KOLAATTAM

The term *Kolaattam* is derived from two words - *Kol* meaning a small stick and *attam* meaning to play. *Kolaattam* is a popular stick dance performed by the young girls during the *Kolaattam* festival, which commences with the coming out of the new moon on *Deepavali* and ends on the full moon night. The girls dance with two wooden sticks, artistically painted, which they strike against each other.

According to a popular legend, Goddess *Parvati* underwent severe penance for nine days praying for power for the *Devas*, so that they could conquer the *Asura* named *Bhanda*. The young girls performed the *Kolaattam* in front of Lord



Nandideva, to appease him and convince him to reduce the severity of *Parvati*'s penance. According to another legend, the dance has its origins in Lord *Krishna*'s *leelas* with the *gopinis* of Vrindavan.

SILAMBATTAM

Silambattam is an ancient martial art form of Tamil Nadu, practiced by men. In ancient times, this art form would be performed only by the members of the Naddar community, but is now practiced by several tribes and communities of the state. The origin of this art form was as a means of self-defense to ward off enemies and wild animals, but has now evolved into a celebratory dance, performed at temple festivals and social ceremonies.



The name of the dance possibly comes from the Silambam, a short stick made of extremely hard wood, which could effectively deal with sword attacks. The armies of ancient Tamil kings were imparted training in handling the Silambam. In stage presentations, today, besides the Silambam, the sword and deer horns are also used as weapons.

THAPPATTAM / PARAIYATTAM

Thappattam also known as *Paraiyattam* is a drum dance of the *Paraiyar*

community, which finds mention in ancient *Sangam* literature. The *Parai*, a variety of the drum, was used by the ancient Tamil kings for declaration and proclamation of messages and orders. The *Shaivites* and *Vaishnavites* also used the *Parai* as a ritualistic instrument during the *Bhakti* movement. The instrument acquired the name *Thappu*, based on the action of beating on it. The unique feature of the *Thappattam* is that the dancer and musician is the same person, there are no separate musicians. The beats of the drum and the movements of the body are in total synchronization in this art form. Earlier, the dancers would lead funeral processions, but today it is an integral part of all auspicious occasions like weddings, childbirth and worshipping of community deities.



THERUKOOTHU

Therukoothu is one of the most ancient folk art forms of Tamil Nadu, incorporating music, dance, drama and painting. It is a street play put up by the village actors for the collective enjoyment of the entire village. In this form of folk theatre, there is little distinction between

the actors and spectators. Even though the dramas deal with mythological events, they have abundant comic relief and are performed throughout the year. The story, dialogue, music, songs, dances and make-up are passed on from one generation to the next orally, and not written down – this is its unique feature.





Lakshadweep





LAVA DANCE

The Lakshadweep Islands are an archipelago of 36 exquisite coral islands, having their own distinct culture and traditions existing for over centuries. Despite the influence of Islam, a caste system continues to exist based on occupation - landowners, sailors and cultivators. People of Lakshadweep celebrate all religious festivals in their own way accompanied by the famous *Lava* dance. This very colourful dance of Lakshadweep remains confined to Minicoy Island. The dancers wear colourful costumes and a unique headgear, and carry a very special drum of indigenous make. The impressive drum beats and prolific and profuse movements of the dancers make it a very interesting dance form.

PARICHAKALI DANCE

The *Parichakali* Dance is a very popular dance of the menfolk of the Lakshadweep Islands. Martial in nature, the dancers use a wooden sword and shield to perform the dance. Some formations are inspired by duel combats. The dance, which describes the valour of war heroes of the past, begins in a slow tempo and gradually develops



and ends in a crescendo of agile physical movements.

KOLKALI

Kolkali is an ancient stick dance of Kerala and Lakshadweep, dating back to over 200 years. *Kolkali* means 'dancing with sticks' and this popular dance is performed in the month of April, after the paddy has been harvested. The men and women move in a circle, striking their sticks against one another, moving in

large and clear steps and swaying to the rhythm of the *Chenda*, *Elatham* and *Matihalam*. The dance is joyous, and the accompanying songs, which are full of gusto, are sung first by the leader and then repeated by the dancers in chorus. The songs include a great deal of alliteration, and contain many Arabic, Urdu and Tamil words. The circle expands and contracts as the dance proceeds and the music rises in pitch, finally reaching a crescendo.



*Andaman and
Nicobar Islands*



NICOBARESE DANCE

The creative expression of the *Nicobarese* people is closely associated with the environment. Nature has always been

the strongest inspiration for them. The *Nicobarese* tribes living in the Car Nicobar Island of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands are among the tribes that have accepted the value of progress. The most important festival celebrated by the *Nicobarese* tribe is the *Ossuary Feast*. At



this feast, the members of the family pay homage to the soul of the departed head of the family. On this occasion, the *Nicobarese* folk dance is organized and all invitees take part in the dance. The festival is celebrated on a full moon night so that there is sufficient light for the night-long performance. All the people who are invited join in the dance. The dance is performed in a circular formation. The dancers extend their arms across each other's back with the

hand resting on the next person's shoulder. Both men and women join in the dance but in separate groups. The dancers wear the traditional costume consisting of coconut and plantain leaves around their heads and waist. There are no musical instruments accompanying this performance. This folk dance is also performed during canoe-racing and other seasonal festivals. A pig fight follows the folk dance in the morning.



DANCES OF THE GREAT ANDAMANESE

The *Great Andamanese* people appreciate rhythm and time but not pitch or tune. They sing in unison, but not in parts. The key in which a solo or a chorus starts is quite accidental. They can be readily taught any dance step and they can also learn it by themselves from observation. The composer of the song always sings without action or gesticulation and always to the same rhythm. The songs relate to travel, sport and personal adventures, they never relate to love and very rarely to beliefs and superstitions.



STICK FIGHTING



Stick Fighting is a traditional game of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands that has almost gone into oblivion. The stick was at one time the only weapon available to the people of the Islands living in forested areas to protect themselves against animals and other dangers. Youngsters started playing with the sticks and it became a popular sport. Gradually, the game has been stylised and is now presented as a form of martial art on festive occasions.



Bihar



KARMA DANCE

The traditional *Karma* dance gets its name from the *Karma* tree which stands for fortune and good luck. The dance begins with the planting of the tree, followed by circular formations around it. In this group dance, there are usually as many men as women dancers. The dancers form a two-tiered formation and

the movements are usually backward and forward, towards and away from each other. The dancers swing to the rhythm of the drum and the clapping of the womenfolk. Later, breaking the formation, the dancers thread in and out and the body movements involve the bending of the torso and the knees. The dancers put their arms around the waists of their neighbours and form semi-





circular rows. Each row of dancers sings and dances alternately to the accompaniment of the percussion instruments, the *Mandur* and *Timki*. Drums beat fast and loud and the dance ends on a happy note. The choreography is imaginative and the themes of the songs are contemporary and relevant.

JHIJHIA DANCE

Jhijhia is a prayer dance that originated in the Koshi region of Bihar and is performed during droughts, when the land is dry and parched and there are no signs of clouds in the lifeless sky. Through the *Jhijhia* dance, the young girls offer their prayers to the king of gods, Lord *Indra*. The dancers pray to the Lord of the Rains for life-giving rain and a good crop. The words of the song *Haali Huli Barsaaun Inder Devta* depict the conviction and deep devotion of the dancers as they pray to their Lord.



JHARNI DANCE

The *Jharni* dance is a ritualistic dance performed by the *Julaha* community during *Muharram*. The dancers use bamboo sticks split at one end. They stand in a circular formation, and move around, each dancer striking the stick of his partner. The sound produced provides the beat for the dance.



JAT JATIN

The women of the Mithilanchal region perform the *Jat Jatin* dance on moonlit nights during the monsoons. Unmarried girls and young housewives assemble in a courtyard and, accompanied by a drum, dance from midnight to dawn. As they dance, they enact in gestures the epic story of the love of *Jata* and *Jatin*. The most dramatic part of the dance is when a wicked boatman breaks through

the dancing ring and kidnaps the beautiful *Jatin*. The lovers are separated but as in all folk tales, all ends well and the lovers live happily ever after.

KAJRI DANCE



The *Kajri* dance welcomes the beautiful season of monsoon. The young girls of the village dance in gay abandon out in the open to express their joy at the approach of the season of fulfilment. The dance is usually performed in the months of *Shravan* and *Bhadrapad*. The young girls bathed in the romance of the season exchange notes with each other about their beloveds. Rain is, after all, the sublime symbol of fertility, of lushness, of birth and rebirth.





turn of his body, his movements change, and he plays both the roles to perfection. Besides depicting the tender moments between a young man and his wife, this dance also makes statements about sorrow and poverty.

MUKHOTA NRITYA

The Mukhota Nritya is an interesting dance form, not the least because the male dancer appears wearing the mask of a woman on the back of his head. As he dances facing the audience, he is a man, and when he turns around, he is a woman. With every

SOHAR KHELWANA



Sohara Khelwana is a dance performed by women to celebrate the birth of a child. In India, the arrival of a newborn is celebrated with traditional rituals. The child receives blessings from family members, neighbours and well-wishers. Through the *Sohara* songs, the women compare the new born to Lord *Rama* and Lord *Krishna*, popular Hindu gods who are the embodiments of virtue. The eunuchs play an integral part in the celebrations of childbirth and take part in this dance.



HOLI DANCE (DHAMAR JOGIRA)

Spring is the season of hope and love. Commemorative of the victory of good over evil, the festival of colours is celebrated with unabated enthusiasm by

the young and old alike. Come *Holi* and the hues of the rainbow deck the air in fine mists, the streets in tell-tale smears and our hearts with the joyful hope that peace and happiness shall reign. The *Holi* dance is a vibrant dance form of Bihar. The accompanying songs are sung in the *Dhamar* style, a semi-classical form of singing.





Sharkhand

PAIKA DANCE



The *Munda*, *Ho* and *Oraon* communities of Jharkhand perform the *Paika* dance. This dance is a stylized representation of the rituals connected with the preparations for war. The dancers hold bows, arrows, spears, swords and

shields and the dance is, in fact, a stylized worship of arms. The martial character of the dance is retained by the use of the shield and sword. The dancers display their skills in handling the sword and shield and the dance reaches a climax with the fast beat of the *Madal*. Previously the dance was performed to welcome guests, but nowadays it is also performed on different happy occasions like weddings. The *Dusehra* celebrations remain incomplete without this dance. The other indigenous musical accompaniments of

this dance are the *Dhol*, *Nagara*, *Shehnai* and *Ranbheri*. The *Mundas* originally came from North West India, but later moved to the Chota Nagpur Plateau. They began their settlements here by clearing forests.



They were the first tribal people to resist colonization. The *Paika* dance of the *Mundas* symbolizes the great war of their community against the British. Besides their protective chest blades, the dances also wear colourful headgear, bright waistbands signifying valour, and bells around their ankles as part of their elaborate costumes. This captivating dance form is a martial art with variations throughout Jharkhand, and is an expression of the deep sense of love and patriotism that the warrior dancers feel for their motherland.



The *Seraikella Chhau* is one of the three *Chhau* dance forms prevailing in eastern India, in the states of West Bengal, Odisha and Jharkhand. This dance form is based on martial arts and incorporates the *Veera Rasa* of the Indian dramatic spectrum. The *Seraikella Chhau* dance is

SERAIKELLA CHHAU





an art form which combines popular appeal with sophistication. The nature of the themes is similar to those of the classical dance forms, but it has permeated the rank and file of the people. The dances are usually vigorous, and many dances illustrate stories from the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. Other dances depict the moods of animals and their movements, bringing alive the daily lives of the people.

KHARSAWAN CHHAU

The *Kharsawan Chhau* dance is performed without the use of masks, unlike the *Seraikella Chhau* dance. The performers paint their faces and bodies in order to depict different characters.



This dramatic dance form incorporates acting and different stories from the epics and legends of *Krishna*.

HUNTA DANCE

The hunting dance of the *Santhals* who live in the hilly plateaus of the Chota Nagpur region of the *Santhal Parganas* of Jharkhand is known as the *Hunta* dance.



This powerful dance requires a lot of strength and vigour and is performed

only by men. The dance depicts the act of preparing for the hunt with bows and arrows, stalking the animal and finally killing it. Mime, slow strong stepping and measured movements are the distinctive features of this ancient tribal dance.

MUNDARI DANCE

The *Mundari* dance is a very common and popular dance of the *Mundaris*. All members of the community can participate in this dance. This dance is generally performed to celebrate the newly weds. *Munda* songs are often mixed with songs in other tribal languages in such a way that one can rarely identify the pure *Munda* elements in their songs. The remarkable similarity between *Munda* songs and dances and those of other constituent tribal groups in the culture of Jharkhand, lies in this





They have an amiable nature and live in close association with other tribes. The culture of the tribe comprises a wide range of folk songs, traditional musical instruments, dances and folktales. Both male and female members of the community participate in the dances performed at social festivals and gatherings. The *Karsa* dance is performed mainly by women who carry a *kalash* or earthen pitcher with

a form of group dancing, performed with the swinging of the dancers' bodies with especially expressive *mudras* or gestural language. The movements of the dance are very repetitive. The dance style has only a few steps. They move forward a few steps and then retrace their steps.

a lighted *diya* on their heads. The *kalash* symbolizes unity, purity and prosperity. The dance is performed on happy occasions like weddings and also to welcome important guests. Men provide the musical accompaniment.

KARSA NRITYA

The *Karsa Nritya* is a dance of the *Oraon* tribe of Jharkhand. Traditionally, the *Oraons* depended on forests and forest products for their livelihood, but in recent times, they have become settled agriculturists.





Odisha



GOTIPUA DANCE

The *Gotipua* dance emerged from the ruins of the *Devadasi* tradition. From the 14th century onwards, political unrest and social changes took a toll on the *Mahari* or *Devadasi* tradition. During this time, attempts were made to keep alive the beautiful tradition of dance – thus was born the *Gotipua* tradition. The *Gotipuas* were young boys who were trained in singing, dancing and acrobatics in the village clubs or *akhadas*. They were dressed as girls and performed at temple festivals as well as various social and religious occasions.

They also performed at special festive celebrations relating to *Radha* and *Krishna*, like the *Dol Utsav* or Spring Festival, the *Chandan Yatra* or boat ride of *Madan Mohan* and *Radhika* on *Chandan Pushkar* and the *Jhulan Yatra* or Swing Festival. It is believed that the *Gotipuas* began their performance in the



later medieval period, during the reign of the *Bhoi* King Ramachandradev. The present forms of Odissi dance have been derived to a great extent from the *Gotipua* tradition. Though the dances of the *Gotipuas* are in the Odissi style, crucial differences exist in technique, costume and presentation. Interestingly, the *Gotipua* dancers are the singers too. This dance form becomes increasingly difficult to execute with age, and therefore, is mostly performed by adolescent boys. Musical accompaniment to the *Gotipua* dance is provided by the *mardala* (a *pakhawaj*), *gini* (small cymbals), *harmonium*, violin and flute.

MAYURBHANJ CHHAU

The *Mayurbhanj Chhau* is one of the three styles of *Chhau* dance prevalent in the eastern region of the country. While

the other two styles, *Seraikella Chhau* of Jharkhand and *Purulia Chhau* of West Bengal, are performed with masks, the *Mayurbhanj* style does not use masks. *Chhau* dance has a very distinctive character of its own. For its evolution and growth, it has freely imbibed techniques and movements from the prevalent folk and tribal dances of the region, creating a harmonious blend of classical, traditional, folk and tribal styles. The theme of the dance centres around tales from the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata* and legends relating to Lord *Krishna*. The choreography of this ancient rhythmic dance is highly stylized. This dance form flourished under the patronage of the *Maharajas* of *Mayurbhanj* for over a century. It evolved out of the martial art forms of the area and its ceremonial presentation formed an essential part of the annual *Chaitra Parva* festival, which is held for three consecutive nights. The dancers are divided into two competing groups, each trying to outdo the other. It has a wide range of intricate movements



with acrobatic displays. The dance presents an amalgam of dynamism, precision and elegance, which is at times indistinguishable from visual poetry.

PASU NRITYA



The *Pasu Nritya*, or the Animal Mask dance, belongs to a majestic folk dance tradition of Odisha, particularly in the Ganjam district. *Ma Byaghra Devi* and *Ma Thakurani* are the popular goddesses of this area. During festivals, when the idols are taken out on the streets (*Thakurani Yatra*), the masked dancers lead the procession in their colourful costumes. *Pasu Nritya* is also an important part of wedding ceremonies where the dancers lead the bridegroom and his family to the bride's house. The different kinds of animal mask dances include dances wearing the masks of lions, tigers, bulls, horse, deer, goats,

peacocks, ducks, etc. The movements vary according to the kind of animal the dancers represent. The animal's body is made out of a cane frame, which is richly decorated. Two dancers wear the cane frame representing the animal's body, while their legs become the quadruped beast's legs. The ring master (director)

leads the animals around the stage accompanied by the drummers.



SAMBALPURI FOLK DANCES



Western Odisha - a land of myths which owe their origin to the legendary goddess *Sambleswari* - is known for its rich and colourful folk and tribal art forms. A wide range of percussion instruments are used as accompaniments to the *Sambalpuri* Dances. Hundreds of quaint musical instruments like the *Sanchar*, *Samprada*, *Ghumra*, *Madal* and *Ghanta Vadya* are also used. A variety of dance styles like the *Dalkhai*, *Raserkeli*, *Nachnia*, *Bajnia*, *Maelajhara* and *Chutkachuta*, explore the many moods and shades of human life.

Melodious songs and lilting music characterize the *Dalkhai* dance. The dance is performed by the young unmarried girls of the village, who fast the entire day and pray to the folk goddess *Dalkhai* in the evening, for the well-being of their brothers. The *Dalkhai Geet* (song), *Dalkhai Nacha* (dance) and

Dalkhai Baja (music) create an atmosphere of gaiety and merrymaking.

Nachnia, a dance usually performed by male artistes only, on the occasion of weddings, originated from the Sonepur district of Odisha. The music, which accompanies this dance, is usually restricted to drums, and is played to a particular rhythm called *Kaharba*.

Bajnia is a traditional folk dance of western Odisha. The men use an array of musical instruments to provide accompaniment to the women dancers. Often the men join in the dancing as well. The dancers wear colourful local hand-woven *Sambalpuri* sarees and dhotis.

Raserkeli is another folk dance of western Odisha. In this dance too, the women are the dancers and the men provide the musical accompaniment. This dance is performed mainly during



wedding ceremonies. The player of the *Dhol* during this dance is called the *Dhulia*. The *Dhulia* and the dancers spread goodwill through their movements and their smiling faces.

Maelajhoda is another dance form of western Odisha, which is performed by young unmarried girls. The technique of the dance and the musical accompaniments used are similar to the *Dalkhai* dance. Differences exist in the movements of the hands and feet.

The **Chutkichuta** dance is also from Sambalpur in western Odisha. Based on the various ragas of the *Sambalpuri* folk tradition and accompanied by melodious songs, this dance form reflects the rich culture of indigenous art forms in this part of Odisha.

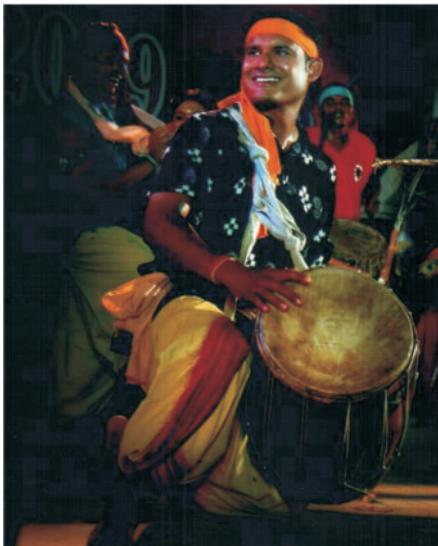
Durla Nacha is another traditional folk dance of western Odisha. The dance is an integral part of the wedding festivities of the tribal communities. On the morning of the nuptials, oil and turmeric paste are first offered to the family deity and then to the groom and bride. Singing and dancing accompany the ceremony.

GHANTA MRUDANGA

The *Ghanta* and *Mrudanga* played together is a genre of folk music from Ganjam district, practised by the *Vaishnavite* sects, in praise of Lord *Krishna* and Lord *Rama*. During *Rathayatra*, these musicians are an important part of the procession. Through dancing and innovative choreography, that includes pyramid formations, the music of the *Ghanta* and *Mrudanga* is presented by the musicians dressed in colourful costumes.



BAJASAL



The *Bajasal* is an exciting tribal dance form of Kalahandi district of Odisha. During weddings and other social festivities in Kalahandi, a particular area is designated for the drummers. The drummers create an atmosphere of gaiety through the spirited beating of the *Dhol*, *Mohuri*, *Tasha*, *Nishan* and *Taal*. In this atmosphere of youthful exuberance, the young boys and girls get up and start matching their steps with the rhythms created by the drummers. The rhythms bring alive the *Shringar Rasa* of the Indian dramatic spectrum. There is no limit to the number of dancers who can join the dance and often the performance goes on for the entire night. An exciting part of the dance is the dancers asking the *Dholia* questions and the *Dholia* replying through the beats of the *Dhol*.

DASAKATHIA

Dasakathia is a popular folk art form of Odisha. *Dasa* is the devotee, and *Katha* denotes six wooden pieces played in tune with the prayer of the devotee. A *Dasakathia* presentation usually consists of two persons – the chief singer and the *Palia*, who helps him in all aspects of singing and acting. The two persons stage a whole drama, act all the parts, and change their tones from minute to minute. They relate humorous stories in between to break the monotony of the presentation.



This folk form is associated with the worship of Lord *Shiva*, and during the performance *Shiva's* various forms like *Rudra*, *Hara*, *Mahadeva*, *Shankar* and *Bholanath* are described. In the presentation, the greatness of other gods of the Hindu pantheon, like *Vishnu*, *Krishna*, *Ganesh* and *Kali* are also enacted. The main singer plays four pieces of *Katha* and the *Palia* plays the remaining two pieces.

SAHI YATRA



Sahi Yatra is a tradition of Puri, Odisha. It is a unique form of processional theatre, performed in the by-lanes of Puri town. There is no authentic history about the growth and development of *Sahi Yatra*, but the first reference to this folk theatre form is found in the Sanskrit play *Anargha Raghava*. Most of the episodes enacted during the *Sahi Yatra* are taken from the *Ramayana*. *Sahi Yatra* begins on *Ram Navami* and ends on the day of *Ram Abhishek*.

Sahi Yatras are organised by the *Akhadas* and *Jagagharas*. The objective of *Sahi Yatra* is to protect the holy shrine of *Jagannath*, *Balabhadra* and *Shubhadra* from attacks by invaders. *Sahi Yatra* is performed continuously for three days in early spring. It is also

performed during the different *Beshas* or festivals related to Lord *Jagannath*.

The actors present at the *Sahi Yatra* include the *Naga* dancer, *Ravana*, *Durga*, *Kali*, *Nabasira*, *Saptsira* etc. The *Nagarjun Besh* of Lord *Jagannath* is presented through the majestic style of walking or *Chali* and the highly decorated costume. The spontaneity of the performance is what makes *Sahi Yatra* very special.



SANKHA BADAN

The Bay of Bengal that bathes the golden sands of eastern Odisha has had a beautiful impact on the lives of the people of the region. The Blowing of Conches or *Sankha Badan* during festivals and religious ceremonies (like *Ratha Yatra* and *Chandan Yatra*) is a very common ritual. In the olden days, conches were also used as bugles in the battlefields. The exponents of this art form can blow two conches at a time for five to six minutes without a break, simultaneously performing intricate body movements.



SANCHAR NRITYA

The *Sanchar* dance is a very old folk art form of Sambalpur in western Odisha, where Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu began his preaching of Vaishnavism. Chaitanya Dev's teaching of mysticism attracted the attention of the people and spread to other parts of Odisha.

The *Sanchar* dance is also known as the *Bahak Gahak* dance. The principal performer of *Sanchar* is the *Bahak*, or drummer, who plays the *Mridanga*. The rhythms created, known as the *Nad Brahma*, create a wave, which is believed to reach the heavens. The *Bahak* is a singer, instrumentalist, as well as a dancer. The other musical instruments accompanying this dance include the cymbals, *Kathia* and *Ghungroos*. The *Gahaks* or *Palias* play the other instruments and also provide the vocal support. A minimum of three performers are required for this presentation.



SAURA DANCES

The *Saura* tribe is one of the oldest tribes of India and finds mention in Hindu mythology, classics and the *Puranas*. In the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* they

have been mentioned as *Savaras*. The *Sauras* live in the midst of nature and Mother Nature has been the strongest influence in their lives. Their colourful



dances include the Spring dance, performed by young women; dances performed to propitiate the deities at the time of planting the seeds; and, dances performed to celebrate a good harvest. The dances are also performed on social occasions like weddings. They have many indigenous folk instruments like horned drums, flutes and clarions, which accompany the dances.



West Bengal



BAUL AND FAKIRI MUSIC

Bengal, during the post-medieval period, was a divided and closed society. Ruled by religious strictures, Hindus and Muslims led cloistered lives, against which grew a protest that took on the character of a cult. The community of

protesters could be identified by the robes they wore (a long saffron-coloured cloak called the *alkhalla* with a turban of the same colour), the one-stringed instrument or *Ektara* they always carried, and the bells they tied to their perpetually dancing feet. Sometimes the *alkhalla* would be made of different pieces of cloth patched together. They were the *Bauls*, the creators of a phenomenal music tradition that has survived and grown despite the ravages of time. Apart from the expected bamboo flute, they developed a variety of musical instruments like the *Premjuri* and *Dotara*, the *Khamak* and *Goopi Jantro*, the *Kartal* and *Dubki* among others.

As the Spartan tendencies and mysticism of the *Bauls* stem from a Hindu tradition, a very similar people – the *Fakirs* – are rooted in Islam, providing a unique parallel between these two historically contentious religions.





Baul and *Fakiri* music is a rich, vibrant and living folk heritage of Bengal. For these wandering minstrels, spirituality goes beyond race and religion. In a caste-ridden society, stifled with superstitions and religious intolerance, the *Bauls* and *Fakirs* sang about humanism and universal brotherhood. The *Bauls* and *Fakirs* create soulful, mellifluous music.

PURULIA CHHAU

The indigenous people of Purulia say, *Senge Jujung, Kajigo Durung* –we dance as we walk and sing as we speak. This area has a very rich heritage of rural and tribal folk songs and dances, the most popular being the *Purulia Chhau* dance. The *Purulia Chhau* dancers blend dance, mock combat techniques, the gaits of birds and animals into a magnificent spectacle. The dancers' feet never touch the ground and their





visages remain masked. This overnight performance is held all through the year, but particularly during the spring festival, *Chaitra Parva*.

The *Chhau* dance of Purulia district is one of the most vibrant and colourful art forms. Emerging from martial practice, the *Purulia Chhau* is a vigorous form of dance drama that draws its themes from the two great Indian epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*.

Masks and elaborate headgear are the ornamental apparels of the *Chhau* dancers. The dance is believed to date back to over a century, though the specific date of its origin cannot be definitely ascertained. The dance was patronised by the royalty and landlords of the region. Since its

inception, the members of the *Mahato*, *Kurmi*, *Bhumija*, *Deowa*, *Bhuama* and *Dom* communities have sustained this dance form. The dance is an essential part of the *Gajan* festival, that celebrates the glories of Lord *Shiva*. Today, the dance is no longer restricted to one particular time of the year.

SANTHALI DANCE





The *Santhals* are an integral part of the folklore of Bengal. The *Santhali* dance form is seen in the districts of Birbhum, Bankura, Malda and Bardhaman. Dance is an integral part of all festivities of the *Santhal* community. Musical accompaniment is provided by instruments like the *Madol*, Flute, *Dhamsa*, *Jhanj*, *Kartal*, and occasionally, the *Shehnai*. Dances are usually performed on a full-moon night and are connected with the celebration of certain rituals. A notable feature of the *Santhal* dances is the unison in movement. The dancers stand in a line holding hands

and move to the rhythm of the *Madol*. Usually the women take part in the dance and the men provide the musical accompaniment. Simplicity of theme and language is what makes the *Santhal* dances so endearing. Nowadays, *Santhali* men also take part in the dances, most of which are seasonal and reflect the ritualistic life of the *Santhal* community. Each dance form has its own distinctive rhythm and dance style. Some of the popular dances include the *Sohrai*, which is a harvest dance, inviting all the village folk to come out of their homes and join in the festivities, and the *Dasai*,

a dance performed just before the *Durga Puja*, when the *Santhali* men go out to the neighbouring villages, where they sing and dance to collect donations of rice and alms.



The *Santhal* dance reflects the beauty of rural Bengal and adds colour to the palette of the folk culture of the state.



BRATACHARI – RAIBENSE

The *Raibense* dance which is performed by a group of male dancers is a part of the repertoire of the *Bratachari* tradition of West Bengal. The *Raibense* dance of ancient Bengal is a significant and authentic reminder that the Bengalis were once renowned for their military prowess. The dance belongs to a living tradition of the war dances of ancient

Bengal. *Rai* means royal or kingly, and *bansh* or *bansha* means bamboo. This was used by the infantry soldiers in the Middle Ages. This vigorous dance form includes mock fighting and acrobatics. The *Dhol* and *Kanshi* are the main instruments used. The strident rhythmic notes of the *Dhol* and the clanging of the *Kanshi* generate courage and daring in the hearts of the dancers. No songs are sung or verses recited during this martial dance. Instead, vigorous yells mark the various sectional movements. The simplest costume, a *dhoti* (which is the

traditional dress of Bengali men) is worn with a strip of red cloth signifying spirit and valour. Shri Gursasaday Dutt, ICS, was responsible for resurrecting this ancient group dance and modifying it to its present form.

The *Bagdi*, *Bauri* and *Dom* communities of Bardhaman, Birbhum and Murshidabad districts, perform the dance.





JHUMUR SONGS AND DANCES

Jhumur is a popular form of folk song and dance among the rural communities of Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand and Odisha. The themes of the *Jhumur* songs are varied – there are songs on the eternal love of *Radha* and *Krishna*; some songs are based on stories from our epics and mythology; some pay tribute to Mother Nature; some songs depict the simple lifestyle of villagers. *Dnar Naach* or *Jhumoer Naach* are colourful and rhythmic dances, where the women dance with their arms entwined.

Darbari Jhumur songs are reminiscent of the courts of *raj*as and *zamindars*. These songs have been enriched through the incorporation of elements of classical



music. *Naachni Jhumur* evolved as dancers sang *Jhumur* songs and danced.

The *Jhumur* dance is one of the liveliest folk dances of Bengal. Several variations of this dance have emerged from Purulia, Birbhum, Bankura and Bardhaman. This is an elaborate dance, choreographed and performed by professional artistes. Here lies its essential difference with forms like the *Santhal* Dance. The dance is performed by girls while the boys play the *Dhol* and *Madol*. This entertaining dance is performed on stage and during road shows. Heavy make-up and ornate jewellery form part of the costume of the *Jhumur* dancers. This secular dance form is accompanied by fast-paced and cheerful *Jhumur* songs.

GAMBHIRA

Gambhira is a unique folk form of *Malda* region of West Bengal, performed during the *Gambhira Utsav*, in which *Shiva*, the third god of the Hindu trinity is worshipped. The celebration of the *Gambhira Utsav* became popular after the decline of Buddhism in the 7th and 8th centuries. During the rule of the Sena dynasty the celebration of *Gambhira Utsav* became widespread in Malda. The current form of the *Gambhira* folk theatre emerged during the reign of the Palas in the 10th century.

A *Gambhira* performance has four parts. It starts with the *Mukhopad* or Introduction, followed by the *Vandana*, where *Shiva* is eulogized.

One of the performers dresses up like Lord *Shiva*. *Shiva* allegorically represents the feudal lord or the government in today's social context. The other characters wear torn and worn out clothes and use rags as wrist bands and head bands. They represent the poor masses. Using a wonderful mix of song, dance and satire, they tell Lord *Shiva* about their woes, concerns and worries. *Gambhira* is thus a traditional tool of social communication used by the common people to voice their grievances and aspirations. The third part is called Duet or *Charyaari*, meaning four friends. In this part, two or four performers talk

about social problems or political issues, using humorous dialogue, ridicule and songs. The last part is called Report and in this part, the performers elaborate on the events and happenings of the past year. The *Gambhira* folk form uniquely manifests a traditional way of social audit.

Gambhira has been traditionally used for community education. *Gambhira* played a significant role in mobilizing mass involvement in our struggle for independence. Social and political themes became popular during the first and second world wars. *Gambhira* is a critique of contemporary society.





*Arunachal
Pradesh*



RIKHAM PADA DANCE

The *Nishi* community of Lower Subansiri district of Arunachal Pradesh performs the *Rikham Pada* dance as a part of the celebrations of their main festival, *Nyokum*. The *Nishis* perform a medley of dances and songs, which are collectively called *Rikham Pada*. It is believed that the forefather of the *Nishis* - *Abotani* - who migrated to Arunachal Pradesh along with his tribe many centuries ago introduced these dances. Many of the songs are prayer songs, sung in the honour of the different tribal deities worshipped by the tribe. Some of the songs are in the form of

ballads that describe legends of love. Women express their love for their husbands through these songs. The dancers wear elaborate headgear made of cane shavings, which is considered auspicious, and an antique belt of beaten bell metal, which is a family heirloom,



handed down through the generations. The most important festivals of the *Apatanis* are *Morom* and *Mloko*, combinations of thanksgiving and fertility rites. They are celebrated in winter after the harvesting has been completed and in spring to commemorate the beginning of the life cycle.



DAMINDA DANCE

Daminda, is a dance of the *Apatani* tribe of Arunachal Pradesh, performed during the three-day long agricultural festival of the tribe, *Dree*. The dance marks the beginning of the rice sowing season and is accompanied by prayers for a good

harvest and protection from natural calamities. The dance is an offering to the four gods of the tribe, namely *Tamu*, *Harniang*, *Metii* and *Danyi*.

The *Daminda* repertoire glorifies the greatness of the *Apatanis* and their neighbouring tribes, and also includes songs on love and romance, and are sung by women and children. Dressed in



traditional attire, the *Apatanis* celebrate *Dree* as a festival of joy and hope. The dance is not only characterized by colour, prayers and rituals, but is also representative of the rich cultural heritage of the tribe. During the *Dree* festival, women visit their relatives and present them with home-made beer and wine as a gesture of love and affection.

MINTO SILLE DANCE

Minto Sille is the dance of the *Monpas*, a major ethnic group of Arunachal



Pradesh, who inhabit parts of West Kameng and Tawang districts. This dance is among several others performed by the community during the *Losar* festival, which marks the tribe's new year celebration. Singing and dancing is an integral part of *Monpa* culture. Most *Monpas* are followers of Tibetan Buddhism, a religious belief they adopted in the 17th century. However, many elements of their pre-Buddhist faith continue to remain strong.

Minto Sille literally means blooming like a lotus. In this dance, the human heart is compared to a lotus, which blooms even in the murkiest of surroundings. Similarly, every heart has a place of purity which we need to seek out even in a world of greed. The dance depicts the socio-cultural beliefs of the *Monpas*.

BUSIDU/AMUALU DANCE

The *Apatani* women perform the *Busido* or *Amualu* dance during the *Dree* festival celebrated in the month of June, to appease the gods for a good harvest and seek protection of the crops from rodents and pests. The dance is performed on top of a hillock outside the village. The dancers stand in two separate lines and make varied forward and backward movements. In this dance, the dancers are the singers too.





SAPOLORO DANCE

The *Tangsa* tribesmen of Tirap district perform the *Sapoloro* dance during *Champhang*, a pre-harvesting festival, celebrated during March-April. Men and women of the community dance together around a bonfire at dusk. Holding hands, the performers form a circle, with the women on one side and the men on the other. Dressed in their traditional finery, the performers make several variations within the circular formation. The men wear green *lungis* and sleeveless shirts, and the women wear traditional petticoats and blouses, with their heads covered in scarves. The performers dance to the rhythm of songs sung either by the troupe leader or a chorus.

OZELE FESTIVAL DANCE

In Arunachal Pradesh, the *Ozele* festival is a pre-harvesting festival, celebrated by the *Wancho* tribe, during February-March, after the sowing of millets. This ritualistic dance, performed by both men and women, in a circular formation,



around a bonfire, is an integral part of the festival. The festival concludes with the priest leading the tribesmen to the outskirts of the village to dispose a ceremonial bamboo pole, called the *zangwang*. The disposal of the *zangwang* signifies the end of all calamities and the promise of a bumper crop, which will ensure a prosperous life for the villagers. The men wear the typical loincloth of the tribe and accessories like armlets, bead necklaces, head gear etc. The women wear the traditional attire of the tribe and adorn themselves with earrings, bead necklaces, metal bangles, armlets etc.

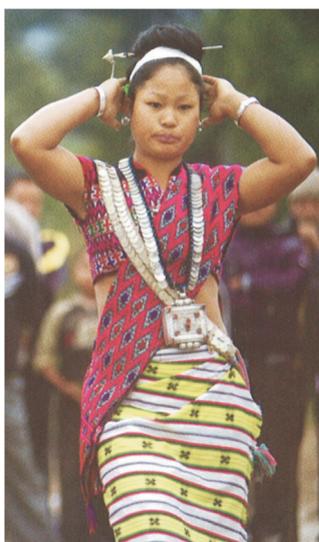
IDU MISHMI RITUAL DANCE

The *Idu Mishmi* ritualistic dance is performed exclusively by members of the priestly class of the *Idu Mishmis*. The origin of this dance is believed to date back to a time when the first funeral ceremonies of the tribe were conducted by two priests, namely, *Chineuhu* and



Ajijuh. Being a part of funeral services, this is a solemn dance, in which the dancers stand in a line and strike small drums that are slung from their necks. The priest sings a line of a song and the others play on their musical instruments, and stamp their heels on the ground to the beats of the drums. The song sung by the priest is repeated by the other performers who simultaneously perform swift, intricate dance steps. All are dressed in traditional costumes, with the priest and priestess wearing additional ornaments like decorated head bands and metal bells.

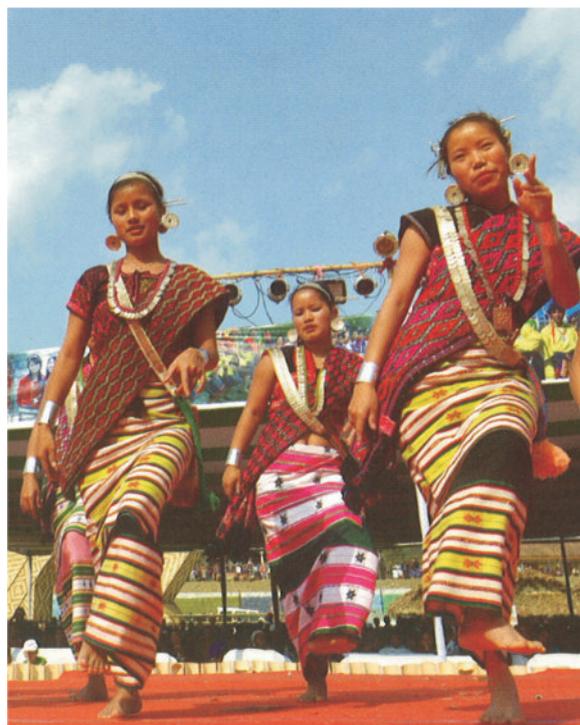
BUIYA DANCE



The *Buiya* dance is performed by the *Digaru Mishmis* of Lohit district at festivals like *Duiya*, *Tazampu* and *Tanayu*. It is also a part of

social occasions, as it is believed that the performance of this dance brings good health and prosperity to the performer as well as the community. Drums, gongs and cymbals are the accompanying musical instruments.

TAH-TANGGONG



The *Tah-Tanggong* is an ancient folk dance of the *Mishmi* community of Lohit district. Performed in praise of the Almighty, *Donyi-Polo*, at all local festivals and important social gatherings, the dance has a social and religious significance in the life of the tribesmen. Alongside the performance of the dance by the young boys and girls of the community, the priests conduct certain religious rituals. Through the dance and rituals all pray for a prosperous society, well-being of the community members and prevention of natural calamities and occurrence of epidemics.

SOLUNG PONUNG DANCE



The *Ponung* dance is performed by the young married women of the *Adi* tribe during the summer festival of *Solung*, held in August-September, before the harvesting season. The festival is celebrated after the sowing of crops, to propitiate *Kine-nane*, the goddess of crops. *Solung* is marked by a lot of feasting and merriment, the singing of *Ponung* songs and dances by women. The *Miri*, a person with knowledge in mythical songs about the origin of paddy and other crops, leads the singing. The music is provided by the rattling of the iron discs loosely fitted to the hilt of his or her sword. The women form a circle around the *Miri* and dance while simultaneously repeating in chorus the verses sung by the *Miri*.

TROH DANCE

Young men and women of the *Khampa* tribe perform the *Troh* dance on festive occasions like *Losar*, and at social functions like weddings and house-warming get-togethers. In this celebratory dance, the dancers move in and out of circular formations and exhibit intricate footwork.

BROH DANCE

Men and women of the *Memba* tribe residing in the west Kameng district, perform a group of celebratory dances, collectively called the *Broh*. Though there is no fixed occasion for the performance of *Broh*,



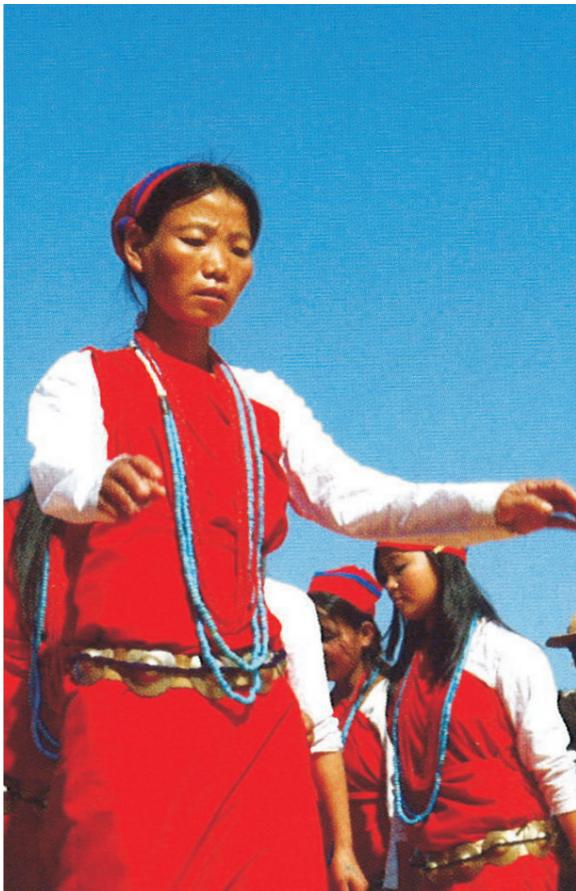
it is usually performed on festive occasions like *Losar* and *Lha Soeba* and social occasions like weddings and house-warming ceremonies. Wearing the traditional attire of the tribe, the dancers interlock their fingers to form a circle and move with synchronized steps, which are repetitive in nature. There is no musical accompaniment to this dance.

BOYEN/KUBA TENDONE DANCE

Men of the *Hill Miri* tribe of Upper Subansiri district perform the *Boyen* or *Kuba Tendone* dance to welcome a bride into her new family. This highly entertaining dance is performed to the accompaniment of gongs. Through the performance of this dance, the ice is broken and the two families forge a new bond for life.

KOINIRETO AND HURRUGUMTE DANCE

The *Koinireto* and *Hurrugumte* dances are performed by the *Tagin* tribesmen, during weddings, to welcome the bride into her new home. In *Koinireto*, the bride's family and friends reach the bridegroom's house and perform the dance in the courtyard, brandishing their swords. The bridegroom's kinsmen also dance simultaneously in a separate group. After some friendly rivalry between the two groups, they start dancing together. In *Hurrugumte*, the two families stand in a circle holding hands in the passage leading to the groom's house. The striking of gongs provides the musical accompaniment.



LOKU BAWANG DANCE.

The *Nocte* tribes of Tirap district in Arunachal Pradesh perform the *Loku Bawang* dance during the *Loku* festival. The dance celebrates the unity and strength of the village society. The dance also describes the beauty of *Nocte Land* – the dense forests with its abundance of flora and fauna.

ORANG FESTIVAL DANCE



The *Orang* festival is celebrated by the members of the *Nocte* tribe for five days during the period that separates the sowing of millets and paddy. A festive air prevails in the village, as delicacies are cooked in every household and large quantities of homemade beer is fermented. An important part of the festival is to offer food to the skulls of the slain people, who were killed during head hunting expeditions. The *Noctes* believe that this ritual appeases the slain person and they can escape his wrath. Dressed in colourful costumes, the young boys and girls dance with intricate movements, around a community bonfire.



Assam



BOHAG BIHU OR RONGALI BIHU

With the advent of spring comes the *Bohag Bihu* or *Rongali Bihu*, a festival of music and dance, when nature like a young woman blossoms into a radiance of light, beauty and colour. It is in this atmosphere that young boys and girls perform the *Bihu* dance, inviting each other to the land of romance. The *Bohag Bihu* or *Rongali Bihu* not only ushers in the Assamese New Year but also the sowing time and the season of marriage. In fact, this festival has its roots in some earlier fertility cult. The *Bohag Bihu* dance is an expression of the joys of spring and the exuberance and vigour of youth. Amidst nature's pristine beauty, young boys and girls perform this dance, accompanied by songs of erotic sentiment, spirited beating of the *Dhol*, soft strains of the

Pepa, and many other indigenous folk instruments.



MORAN BIHU



Moran Bihu is a typical form of *Bihu* dance practised by the *Moran* tribe of Assam. Generally, young *Moran* boys select a place far away from the din and bustle of the city. Here they make a wooden bamboo-house known as the

Bihu-Ghar. The *ghar* is divided into two areas – one for the young boys and the other for the girls. Their songs and dances are woven around the theme of love and yearning. The *Dhol* and *Pepa* provide the musical accompaniment.



MISHING BIHU



Mishing Bihu is a form of *Bihu* dance associated with the *Ali-Ai-Ligang* festival (seed-sowing festival) of the *Mishings*. The dance demonstrates the various stages of the process of cultivation from sowing to reaping. The *Bihu* songs of the *Mishing* tribe have a tell-tale note, a lovely ‘eiiyoo oh’ that rises and falls, as if a cowherd is calling out to his

beloved who is busy reaping the paddy. The *Mishing Bihu* captures the spirit of the festival, of spring, fertility, longing, of the beautiful *kopon* flower (the Assamese orchid) and love like no other. It is a time to sing about *Jonki* and *Panoi*, the Romeo and Juliet of the *Mishings*.



JENG BIHU



Jeng Bihu is an ancient form of *Bihu* dance from Upper Assam. Only women perform this form of *Bihu* dance on a moonlit night in a place far away from an inhabited area. The word *Jeng* possibly means an obstructive barrier between the performers and the audience.



DEORI BIHU



The *Deoris* of Assam are a riverine tribe who originally belonged to the Lohit district of Arunachal Pradesh. They have preserved and maintained their religious beliefs, traditions and practices. The *Deoris* celebrate the *Bohag Bihu* or *Bhohagiyo Bihu* and the *Magh Bihu* or *Maghyo Bihu*. The presentation of *Bihu* by this community has a distinct style.

MUKHOLI BIHU

This dance is similar to the *Rongali Bihu*. The young boys invite the girls with *Bihu* songs, the beating of drums and the tunes of the *Pepa* to join them in the open fields. They exchange feelings of love and affection in spring, the season of love. The music of the buffalo hornpipes and

bamboo clappers paint a portrait of spring that is not seen anywhere else. It is a time when youngsters meet in the fields to dance, a time when young girls in love weave handkerchiefs for their chosen ones.



KAHIN GHURUWA NACH

This is also a part of the traditional *Rongali Bihu* festival of Assam. Young boys and girls attired in traditional costumes perform this dance to the rhythm of the *Dhol*. The dancers very artistically place *thalis* or plates on their bodies and strike different poses during the performance. The lead dancer places as many as twelve to fifteen *thalis* on his body while dancing.



DANCES OF THE BODO COMMUNITY



The *Bodos* are one of the largest ethnic groups of the Brahmaputra Valley, who like the other communities of Assam have nurtured their own distinctive music and dance traditions. They have contributed to a great extent towards upholding the cultural traditions of Assam.

BORDOISHIKLA DANCE



The *Bordoishikla* dance is a very special folk art form of the community. In *Bodo* language, *Bor* refers to a strong wind, *Doi* is water and *Shikla* is a young girl who is as beautiful as a celestial goddess. Poets and writers have woven many legends around the arrival of the sudden evening

storms at the end of spring, at the beginning of the Indian month of *Chaitra*. The storm is imagined to be the beautiful young girl, who has spent her childhood playing in the hills of Assam. After her marriage, she has moved to a faraway land. Distance prevents her from visiting her parents often – she comes just once in the year, announcing her arrival in style, with the *Chaitra* storm. The dance celebrates the arrival of the daughter of the land and is performed to the accompaniment of traditional musical instruments like the *Kham* or drum,

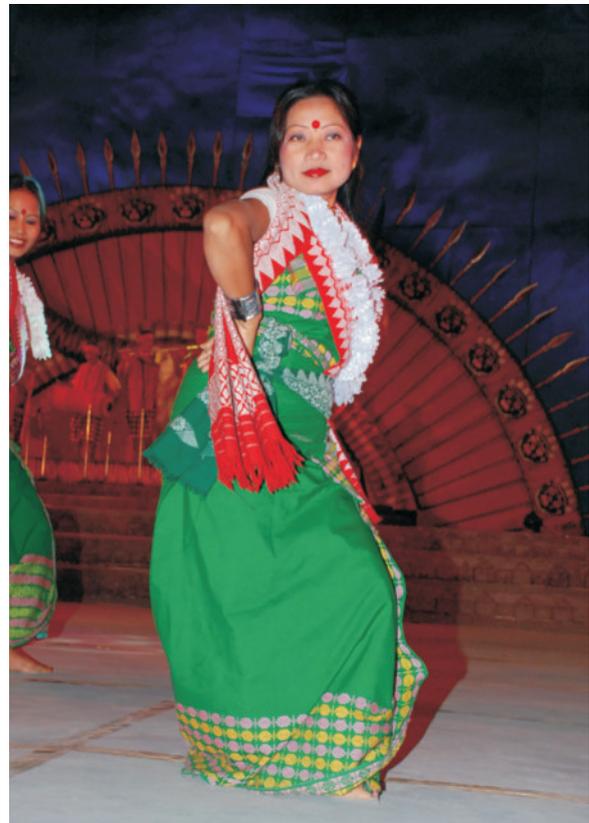


Siphung or flute and *Jotha*. The dancers perform with *Khanjanis* or bamboo clappers in their hands, which provide the rhythm for their movements. The

colourful costumes worn by the dancers and graceful body movements make the dance fascinating.

BAGROOMBA DANCE

Lord Shiva, known as *Bathow*, in *Bodo* language, is worshipped by all members of the community. *Lord Shiva* created the *Panchabhoota*, or the five basic elements of human existence, namely Earth, Water, Fire, Air and Ether. Through the *Bagroomba* dance the young girls of the *Bodo* community offer prayers to *Lord Shiva* and the *Panchabhoota*. Wearing colourful hand-woven traditional attire and holding the ends of scarves strung around their necks, the girls look like beautiful butterflies. The dance begins in a straight line but eventually falls into a circular pattern. This graceful dance is performed to the accompaniment of the *Kham* and *Siphung*.



DAHAL THUNGRI DANCE

The *Dahal Thungri* dance is a spectacular war dance of the *Bodo* community. These women of Indo-Burmese origin, who are very proud of their warrior heritage, perform the *Dahal Thiungri* dance to seek the blessings of the Almighty before the men set out for war. Through the ritualistic *Bathou* worship, they seek



the protection of their men and also vow to take up arms should the need arise. Wearing colourful traditional costumes, the girls begin the dance in slow graceful movements and end with highly rhythmic martial movements. Through this dance, they also ward off any evils that are lurking around in their community.

DANCES OF THE RABHA COMMUNITY

FARKANTI DANCE



The *Rabhas* believe that the souls of the dead are reborn in this world not only as human beings, but also as animals and birds. According to ancient belief, the three birds, *Manchelenka*, *Tandalenka* and *Batiktika* represent the souls of the departed. During the performance of the *Farkanti* dance, these birds are used as symbols of friendship and trust. The

Farkanti dance is performed after the death of a person, in the presence of the kith and kin of the deceased, his friends and the community. The purpose of the dance is to enliven the sorrowful atmosphere in the deceased person's family. Through the dance, prayers are offered to show reverence and respect to the departed soul.

HAMZAR DANCE



Hamzar refers to an age-old agricultural tradition of cultivating paddy on land cleared of forests in the hills and plains. This form of agricultural practice is known as *Jhum* or slash-and-burn cultivation and has been practiced by many tribes from primitive times. It is still largely prevalent among the *Rabhas*. The poorer sections of the tribal community resort to *Hamzar* for cultivating *Ahu* paddy because they do not have suitable plain land to produce *Sali* paddy. The lure of a higher yield attracts even the comparatively well-off sections of the community to *Hamzar*. The tradition of *Hamzar* has well-defined roles for the *Rabha* man and *Rabha* woman. While the *Rabha* men clear the land by cutting down the trees of the forest, the women scrub and sweep the land. Both men and women take part in the ploughing of the land and the



sowing of the seeds. The men keep vigil at night to protect the farmland. They spend the night on raised platforms known as *Robongs*. During the day, the women take care of the crops by scaring away the birds and insects. Both men and women do the reaping of the harvest. The entire process is very aesthetically depicted in the *Hamzar* dance.

DHAOWA DANCE



Hostilities, struggles and conflicts that ultimately culminate in battles and wars are part of human existence from time immemorial. The brave *Rabha* people have faced such situations innumerable times and have fought many battles with other hostile groups. The *Dhaowa* dance

is performed ceremonially, just before the *Rabha* warriors set out for the battlefield. This dance form symbolises the bravery and undaunted spirit of the *Rabha* people that defies defeat or even death.

HANOGHORA



Hanoghora is an attractive folk dance of the *Pati Rabhas* living in the south-western part of Kamrup district, named and performed in honour of the God of Fortune.

KHOSKI

The members of the *Rabha* community perform the *Khoski* dance as a part of the *Khoski Puja* celebration. Performed in the month of April, the *Rabhas* believe that the performance of this dance propitiates *Baikho*, the goddess of wealth and prosperity.

DANCES OF THE TIWA COMMUNITY

LANGKHON FUJA MISHAWA



Langkhon Fuja Mishawa is a traditional dance of the *Tiwa* tribe of Assam. *Tiwa* means enlightened people. The people belonging to this tribe were originally known as the *Laloongs* and they inhabited the western part of the Nagaon district of Assam. The *Tiwas* observe *Beusakh Bihu*, *Magh Bihu* and many other religious festivals. All their festivals start on the first Wednesday

of the related month. The *Langkhon Fuja Mishawa* dance is performed during the festivals observed in the months of November, December and January. The theme of the dance is man's relationship with and dependence on nature. The dancers wear colourful traditional costumes and carry decorated bamboo sticks. Singing, drum-beating, and the melodious strains of the flute accompany this very enjoyable and choreographically interesting tribal dance form.

BARAT DANCE

The *Barat* dance of the *Tiwas* is associated with the *Usha Barat* festival celebrated on the full-moon night in December. During the festival, young girls of the village fast during the day and celebrate in the evening by performing this beautiful dance. The girls, sometimes wearing masks, begin





with the lighting of three hundred and sixty lamps. The tribal king of the region joins the people in their festivities. The celebrations are very grand at Tetelia, home of the *Tiwas*.



DOMAHI KIKANG



The *Karbi* tribe of Assam performs the *Domahi Kikang* dance during spring. There are two varieties of this dance, prevalent in the state - the first is performed by the *Karbi* tribes living in the hilly areas of Assam and the other is performed by the *Karbi* residents residing in the plains. The *Karbi* youths



carry decorated swords and present a very enchanting dance.

ZEMI NAGA DANCE

The *Zemi Naga* tribesmen living in Assam have a set of distinctive dances which imitate the movements of birds and animals. The dancers display tremendous histrionic skills in recreating the movements of the bee, the hornbill and the butterfly.



H Aidang, Hogra and Bahua

The *Sonowal Kacharis* welcome spring, the season of joyous festivity, with a medley of songs and dances. The most well-known of the dances, is the dance performed to the accompaniment of the





Haidang songs. Men in flowing robes, dance with gentle movements, holding peacock feathers in their hands. The *Hogra* dance, on the other hand, is associated with hunting. Both these dances are performed by both the men and women of the community. The *Bahua* dance is unique – it can only be performed by either unmarried men or men who do not have children.

JHUMUR



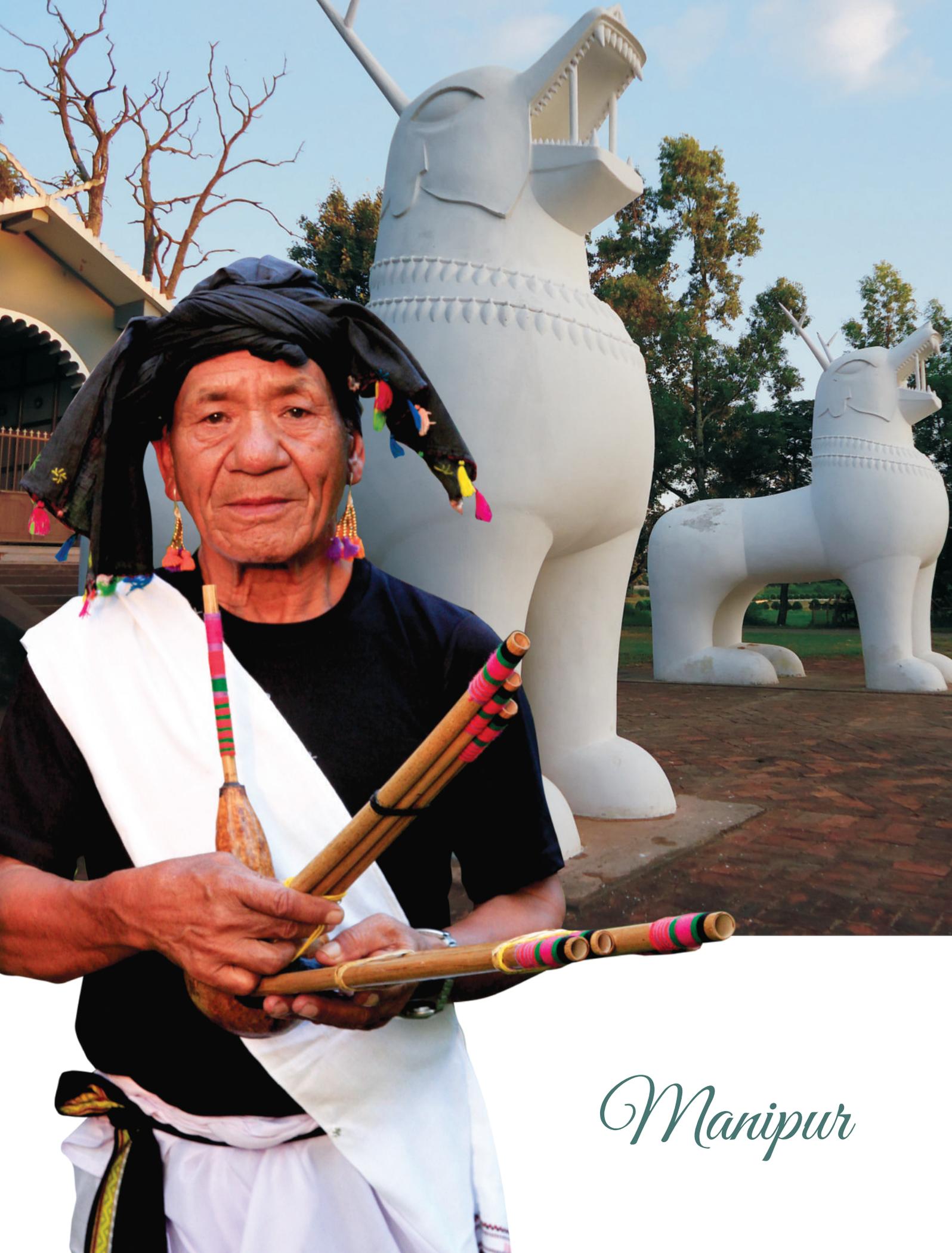
The *Jhumur* dance is a traditional, highly rhythmic folk dance of Assam, usually performed during autumn. It is

secular in concept and has a distinct identity. The dance is performed to the rhythmic accompaniment of the *Madal*.

The young and old dance together in gay abandon. The costume worn by the *Jhumur* dancers is different from the traditional costume worn for the *Bihu* dance. *Cha Baganer Jhumur Nach* is the *Jhumur* dance of the tea gardens. The

dance is performed by the men and women workers together and sometimes by the women alone. Holding each other by the waist, the dancers sway to interesting beats. Precision of footwork is a noteworthy feature of the dance.





Manipur



MAO NAGA DANCES

The *Mao Naga* community of Manipur, resides in the northern mountains of the state. Young girls and boys of the community perform the *Asharali Ado* dance or *Mao Maram* dance, during the annual seed-sowing and harvesting festivals. The *Asharali Ado* involves intricate footwork along with graceful body movements. This colourful dance, known for its vocal rhythms and mellifluous movements, is one of the popular dances of this community. Another popular dance of the *Mao Nagas* is the *Khadedo*, which is performed by the young boys and girls at all village festivals. It is also an integral part of the seed-

sowing and harvesting festivals. The dancers are dressed in traditional attire during the presentation of the dances. The dances of the *Mao Nagas* are known for their vigorous footwork and soft body movements.

KABUI DANCES



The *Kabuis*, inhabiting the western hill ranges of Manipur, have a rich tradition of dance and music and are well-known for their exquisite costumes. During the *Gang-Ngai* festival, the *Kabuis* perform a series of dances in different stylized forms, accompanied by the sound of heavy drums and high-pitched songs. The boys wield sharp weapons or *daos* in their hands and move around in circles, along with girls dressed in traditional costumes.

The *Shim Lam* dance is also known as the Fly dance. According to Kabui legend, a prophet named *Mhung* was the creator of laws relating to all living creatures on earth. *Mhung* performed a sacrifice called *Jourumei*, to which all the creatures were invited. Each of the species performed their own dance. The *Shim Lam* dance is believed to be based on the dance that was performed by the *Tajuibon*, a flying insect with shiny wings, which moves around from one flower to another, drinking nectar. The dance is performed during the *Gang-Ngai* festival of the *Kabuis*.

The *Kit Lam* dance is a colourful dance performed by the *Kabuis* to celebrate a

good harvest. This annual festival mainly involves merrymaking. The rhythmic dance imitates the movement of the crickets.

The *Katabenlu Laam*, which means Bangle dance, is known for its intricate footwork and rhythmic movements.

The *Takin Taremlaam Kabui dance* is also performed at the *Gang-Ngai* festival of the *Kabuis* in January. The *Kabuis*, through their dances, pay homage to their ancestors and worship the spirits of the home and hearth.

The *Khoigu Na-Laam* reflects the social nature of the bees, that wander around in search of nectar and return in clusters to their hive once they are done. The dance is known for its vigorous footwork, soft hand gestures and graceful body movements.

DANCES OF THE KUKIS

The history of the *Kukis* is deeply rooted in valour, integrity, sanctity and commitment. They have a rich culture



and numerous traditions that are unique, interesting and impressive. Their folklore abounds with tales of heroic adventures and poignant romances.

The dances have uncomplicated rhythms and simple repetitive movements so that the entire community can participate.



The *Kum Lem E Lem Leme* dance is performed at the end of the year during the *Chavang Kut* and *Mimkut* Festivals. The *Sangol Ken Khai* is a dance that demonstrates the unity and bonds of brotherhood among the *Kuki* people. The *Khup Suonte* is a dance performed at marriage ceremonies, in which the young newlyweds promise to be kind and loving to each other at all times. The *Sel Pang Lap*, *Achi Seile Sei* and *Lam Gang* are dances performed in honour of a good hunter. The dances are accompanied by a number of indigenous musical instruments like the *Lhemlhei* (a peculiar mouth instrument), *Gosem* (a bagpipe), *Selke* (horn), *Dahcha* (gong), *Theiphit* (whistle), *Theile* (flute), *Pengkul* (trumpet) etc. The musicians sit in a circle and play their instruments and the dancers perform in the centre of the circle. *Lam Kut Lam* is a celebratory dance of the *Kukis* and an integral part of all festivities of the community. Standing in pairs, the young boys and girls, dressed in traditional attire, dance to the beats of a drum or gong, forming circular patterns.

DRUM DANCES OF MANIPUR

PUNG CHOLOM

The *Pung*, or Manipuri drum, is the soul of Manipuri dance. The *Pung Cholom*, or Drum dance, is a visual interpretation of the various rhythmic patterns played on the *Pung*. In this dance, the drummer identifies completely with the intricate rhythms he plays on the drum and expresses it through corresponding body movements and footwork. The *Pung*



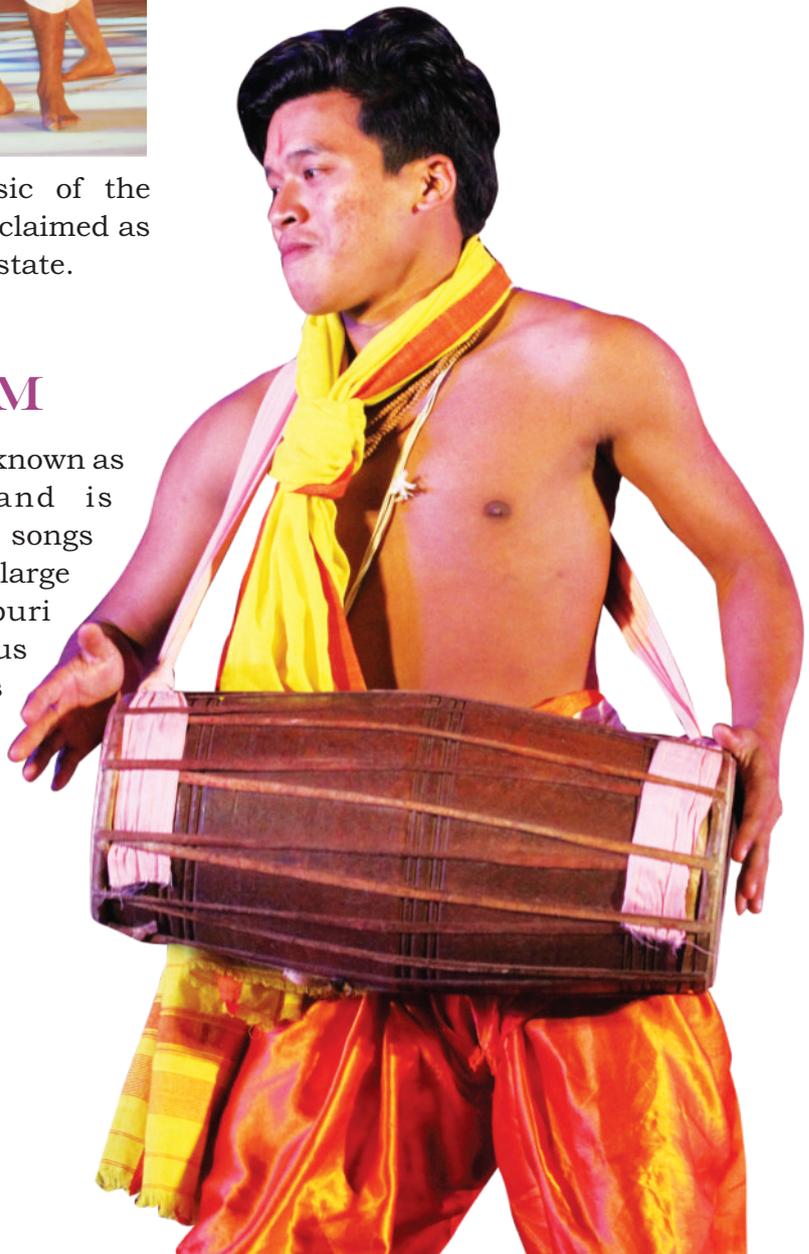
Cholom is part of the music of the *Sankirtana* tradition and is acclaimed as one of the best art forms of the state.

DHOL CHOLOM

Holi, the festival of colours, is known as *Yaoshang* in Manipur and is accompanied by devotional songs and dances. The *Dhol* is a large drum used during Manipuri dances, especially on religious occasions. The *Dhol Cholom* is a form of singing and dancing to the accompaniment of the *Dhol* and is part of the Manipuri *Sankirtana* tradition. *Dhol Cholom*, which involves the intricate interplay of drums, is performed during the *Yaoshang* festival.

DHOL DHOLAK CHOLOM

After the advent of Hinduism, *Vaishnavism* became a way of life for the Manipuris. Consequently, *Sankirtana*, or the worship of Lord *Krishna* and *Radha* through the medium of music and dance, became the most powerful expression of *Bhaktirasa*. This *Vaishnavite* tradition of devotional songs and dances is performed as an offering to Lord *Krishna*. *Sankirtan*, now an integral part of Manipuri culture, is performed on all important occasions and festivals. During the festival of *Yaoshang*, *Dhol*





Dholak Cholom is performed using the *Dhol*, the *Dholak*, and a variety of drums. Dressed in colourful costumes, the drummers play a spectrum of rhythms and perform acrobatic feats simultaneously. The dance beautifully combines vigour and grace.

Lai Haraoba means the festival of gods. The traditional *Lai Haraoba* dance, which enacts the creation of the universe, was initially a part of the *Lai Haraoba* festival. The dance is traditionally presented before the shrines of *Umanglai*, the ancestral god of the *Meiteis*, at the village temples. The principal performers are the *Maibas* (priests) and *Maibis* (priestesses), who are considered to be embodiments of

LAI HARAOPA





purity. They invoke the deity through their repetitive and rhythmic movements, which are highly symbolic. It is essentially a ritualistic dance and is considered to be the precursor of the classical Manipuri dance form as seen today. The *Maibas* and *Maibis*, through their dance, trace the philosophy of the *Meitei* people and describe evocatively their way of life.

The *Lai Haraoba* festival, which mirrors the pre-Vaishnavite culture of Manipur, begins towards the end of the year and continues into the new year (April-May). It is celebrated at the shrines of the ancestral forefathers, the *Laibungs*,

scattered all over the land. At this festival, people seek atonement for their sins and also resolve to lead a chaste life in the coming year.

Khamba Thoibi is the legendary love story of a poor, valiant boy and a princess. The dance is performed by the *Meitis* as a part of the worship of the sylvan deity *Thangjing* of *Moirang*, to seek his blessings. The *Khamba Thoibi* is presented either as a part of the *Lai Haraoba* tradition, or as a duet performance. The dance depicts the story of the poor and brave boy of the *Khuman* clan of *Khamba* who fell in love with *Thoibi*, the princess of *Moirang*.

VAANGCHEN

The *Moyon* community of Manipur celebrates the end of the harvesting season by performing the *Vaangcheh* dance. The dance is associated with a very beautiful social custom of the *Moyons*. After the crop has been harvested, on a chosen day, the villagers take the head of the family home from the fields in a locally made palanquin. On the way home, there are shouts of joy to celebrate a good harvest. On reaching home the gentleman arranges a feast for the entire community. The male members are clad in the traditional shawl and wield a *dao* or machete, or carry a bamboo basket. The women wear the *changkak inih*, *lamtaang inih*, *tudeen inih* etc. Together, they dance



vigorously to the music of the *Khuwng* or drum, *Daar* or gong, and *Sharakii* or horn etc.

MARAM DANCE

In the past, wars were often fought between different tribal communities and also within the same community to establish supremacy. In these circumstances, women played an important role to maintain peace and harmony. The members of the *Maram* tribe perform this dance to bring peace and prosperity to the entire village community.



KHORWA LAAM

A popular art form of the *Kom* tribe, the *Khorwa Laam* celebrates the victory of good over the forces of evil. According to a popular legend of the community, the ancestors of the *Kom* tribe came to earth after overpowering a ferocious tiger, who was blocking their way. The dance, known for its graceful movements is a celebration of this legend.





Meghalaya



WANGALA

The *Wangala* dance is associated with the *Wangala* festival, which is the most important festival of the *Garo* community of Meghalaya. The festival is celebrated with great pomp and grandeur in the month of November, after the harvest, and lasts for several days. According to an ancient *Garo* legend, man did not know the art of cultivation. One day, by chance, he met *Susime-Saljong*, the goddess of wealth. They had lunch together. The man was reluctant and ashamed of sharing his food because it was not appetizing. The goddess felt

sorry for him and taught him how to cultivate a good crop and prepare delicious food out of the produce. She also gave him some seeds. She then requested him to remember her during the harvesting season. Since then, the *Garos* celebrate the *Wangala* festival to honour *Susime-Saljong* for her kind help and blessings. The festival includes a propitiation ceremony of the deity in every village. This is followed by elaborate festivities, which last for two days and sometimes continue for a week. People, young and old, dressed in colourful traditional attire and attractive headgear join in the festivities, which includes singing and dancing. The bravest warrior of the village leads the dance, loudly proclaiming his achievements and those of his ancestors. He is followed by the other dancers. The men play the traditional drums and the women join in, swaying their palms to symbolize the leaves of a local tree.



The first day's ceremony is known as *Rugala* or *Chu Rugala* (*Chu* is rice beer and *rugala* means pouring out). This ceremony is held at the house of the village chief or *Nokma* and is presided over by the priest or *Tuara Nangapa*. Amidst the burning of incense known



as *Sasat Soa*, beating of the drum or *Nagara* and chants, the ceremony is performed with great solemnity. On the second day of the festival called *Kakkat*, young men and women dance, matching their steps to the beating of drums and the blowing of trumpets, made of horn. The dance begins in the house of the *Nokma* and then the dancers move from one house to another, spreading happiness and goodwill. The *Wangala* dance is the most colourful and spectacular dance of the *Garo* community.

KA SHAD MASTIEH

The *Khasis* are one of the major tribes residing in Meghalaya. Music and dance play an important role in the social life of the *Khasi* people. *Shad Suk*

Mynsiem is a colourful thanksgiving festival celebrated during spring by the people inhabiting the *Khasi Hills*.

Ka Shad Mastieh is an ancient war dance of the *Khasi* community performed during the *Shad Suk Mynsiem* festival. Also known as the Victory dance, it celebrates victory in war and is also a thanksgiving to God. Young girls dressed in traditional finery and menfolk in colourful costumes participate in this dance to the accompaniment of drums and indigenous pipes called *Tangonuri*, (considered by the people of Meghalaya as the queen of musical instruments). Besides the highly decorative costume, the important accessories include the sword and a *symphiah*, or whisk. The





sword symbolizes the fearless, courageous warrior and the whisk or *symphiah* is symbolic of one's harmonious relationship with his heart, neighbour and ultimately, the Almighty. The dance has repetitive movements of moving forward and backwards, bowing their heads and dropping their swords to their sides. The dancers stand in two groups facing each other and repeat the movements several times. The dance is performed to honour the memory of their forefathers who laid down their lives to protect the honour and dignity of the women folk of the community and to protect their land from enemies.

SHAD KIEW LING

Shad Kiew Ling (*Shad* means dance, *Kew* means staying or entering and *Ling* means home or house) is a dance performed at the house warming ceremony when a family moves into their new home. This dance is performed after the ritualistic ceremonies are over – it starts with four singers humming tunes





without lyrics which in *Khasi* language is called *Rwaikynud Sur*. The four singers represent the four pillars that form the foundation of the new home.

of the unity and solidarity of the community. This dance is also performed to invoke God's blessings for the well-being of the people.

SHAD SKAIN

Shad Skain (*Skain* means mosquitoes / insects) – the *Shad Skain* is a dance performed to drive away all diseases and evil spirits that plague human life.

SHAD THMA

This is a warrior dance performed by the *Khasi* tribe of Meghalaya. This dance is symbolic of the authority of the women as

SHAD KYRDEM

Shad Kyrdem (*Kyrdem* means stamping the feet rhythmically) – in this dance boys and girls, men and women, participate by holding hands with one another standing in a circular formation, symbolic





family head. The male dancers must obtain the consent and blessings of the women before proceeding with the dance. Their costume consists of orange turbans, fringed jackets and trousers.

The dance is performed in pairs. The men showcase their combative skills in a series of movements. Wielding swords and shields, they chase each other towards the right and then towards the left, maintaining a balanced posture and pace. On completion of a round, the pairs attack each other with swords and shields in mock battle. They execute the chase again. Finally they bow to each other bringing an end to the performance.

The warriors are welcomed back by the women folk. Water is sprinkled on their

ankles by women as a symbolic cleansing of any thoughts of revenge.

HARVEST DANCE

With the advent of winter, the *Khasis* are busy in the fields thrashing the paddy. On an appointed day friends and relatives are invited to come to the fields for harvesting. In the field, the *Nongshoh Kba*, or the harvesters sing *Phawars* (traditional *Khasi* couplets) calling for the winds to blow away the chaffs. After returning home the merriment continues. Men and women in traditional costumes dance with gay abandon and delight.



HOKO DANCE

The *Koch* tribe is a very ancient tribe of north east India. It ruled the western part of undivided Assam and north Bengal around the 15th century AD. The *Koch* tribal community is also found in Meghalaya. A ritualistic dance of the *Koch* tribe is *Hoko*, a funeral dance, performed to pay homage to the departed soul of a prominent person of the community or the ruling family. Through the performance of this dance, members of the community offer

a guard of honour to the departed soul and symbolically escort him to the land of the dead. The dance also inspires the family of the deceased to emerge out of their sorrows and to be optimistic and look ahead.



LAHOO DANCE

The *Jaintias* are a matrilineal society residing in Meghala. The *Lahoo* dance, originally known as *Chad Chiphiah* or *Chiphiah*, is a traditional dance of the *Jaintia* community, performed after the harvesting of crops. Plates are the chief props used in this dance. Presumably, the name *Lahoo* has its origins in the rhythmic chant of the singer to the dancing tune, 'hoo – ah – hoo'. The members of the tribe perform the *Lahoo* dance to express gratitude to God for His bounteous blessings, mercy and love. Wearing the traditional *pnar*, the dancers very skillfully balance plates in this interesting dance form. Through this dance, the young village maidens spread merriment and good cheer all around.



CHORKHELA DANCE

The music and dances associated with the *Chor Magha* festival is known as *Chorkhela*. The young boys of the village form *Chorkhela* groups, consisting of ten to twenty-five members. The boys move around the village singing and dancing and return home at night. This is called *Dhawa Maga*. The boys sometimes also move from village to village displaying their singing and dancing talents.

They spend the nights at different villages.

These performances continue for four to eight days. The whole village community turns up to watch the performances. The young performers take this opportunity to choose companions from amongst the young girls in the audience.





Mizoram



CHERAW

Cheraw is a very old traditional dance of the *Mizos*, or people of Mizoram. It is believed that this dance form existed even in the 1st century AD, when the *Mizos* were still in their early abode in the Yunan province of China. They brought their dance with them when they migrated to the Chin Hills in the 13th century AD and later to present-day Mizoram. Some tribes of South East Asia also have similar dances in one form or the other, which are known by different names.

In the past, the *Cheraw* dance used to be performed to ensure a safe passage for the departed souls of mothers who died at childbirth. Today, the *Cheraw* dance is performed at harvest festivals, marriages and other happy occasions, where it has a role of sanctifying the

proceedings. It is always performed on the occasion of *Buhza Aih*, or bumper harvest of a single family.



It is not a community dance but a dance performed by a few select girls with exceptional skills. Full moon nights are also occasions for performing the *Cheraw* dance. This dance is also known as the Bamboo dance. Long bamboo sticks are used in the dance, held cross-wise on the ground by men who sit facing each other. The women dancers step alternately in and out of these spaces between the bamboos which close shut as the dancers feet are lifted out of them. The formations and footwork of the dancers have many variations. The sharp sounds produced by the bamboo staves marks the rhythm of the dance. Besides, other traditional instruments like the *Mizo* drum or *Khuang*,



a set of small gongs known as *Darbu*, *Darbenthek* or cymbals and big gongs called *Darkhuang* are also used. Girls dressed in colourful *Mizo* costumes of *Puanchei*, *Kwarchei*, *Vakiria* and *Thibna* dance in and out between the bamboo sticks. The dance requires a high level of dexterity on the part of the dancers as the slightest error in timing can lead to grievous injuries.

KHUALLAM

Khuallam literally means 'Dance of the Guests'. This dance is usually performed at the *Khuangcham* ceremony. In order to attain a place in *Pialral* (paradise), one has to earn the coveted title of *Thangchhuah*. To earn this title one has to prove his mettle in war or in hunting by killing many animals (which should include deer, barking deer, wild boars, wild *gayals*, vipers, hawks etc). The title can also be earned by performing various ceremonies, which includes playing host

to community feasts. Thus, the title of *Thangchhuah* can be attained only by the brave or the rich. The community feasts are known as the *Khungchawi* ceremonies. Invitees from other villages attending this ceremony enter the dancing arena of the celebrations, dancing the *Khuallam*. The traditional hand woven *Mizo* cloth, the *puandum* is wrapped over the shoulders of the dancers. The dance is performed by swaying the *puandum*, which has black,



red, yellow and green stripes. As in most other folk dances of the *Mizos*, the dance is accompanied by the *Darbu*, *Darkhuang* and *Khuang*. Usually no songs are sung. Many people take part in the dance.

CHHEIHLAM

The *Chheihlam* dance, developed after AD 1900, is based on the traditional dance movements of the *Tlanglam*. The dance is an expression of joy and happiness. In this dance, the people squat around in a circle on the floor, and sing to the beat of a drum and soft strains of a bamboo flute. Two dancers stand in the middle of the circle and sing the song and dance along with the music. The dance is usually performed after a round of rice beer in the cool evenings. The lyrics are spontaneous, on the spot compositions, recounting the heroic deeds and escapades of members of the tribe and also songs of praise



welcoming honoured guests, who are spending the evening with them. A notable feature of this dance is the presence of an expert dancer who performs various movements with bent knees, stooping low with his limbs close to the body. The dancers wear colourful costumes and as the excitement of the dance increases, the people squatting on the floor join the dance and the audience is also invited to join in. The people of Mizoram get together in the evenings, after the day's work and enjoy themselves by performing the *Chheihlam* dance together. Nowadays, the dance has been adapted for performance on stage.

SARLAMKAI / SOLAKIA

The *Sarlamkai* or *Solakia* dance is an impressive dance performed by the *Pawi* and *Mara* communities of southern Mizoram. The dance is known as *Sarlamkai* by the *Pawi* community and *Solakia* by the *Mara* community. In the olden days, when the tribes were constantly at war with each other, a ceremony was held with the beheaded

skull of the vanquished enemy. This ceremony was performed to ensure that the vanquished soul remained a slave to the victor, even when the victor died. The *Sarlamkai* or *Solakia* dance is an integral part of this ceremony. Any member of the community who performed such a heroic deed that called for such a ceremony was highly regarded and respected by all





members of the community. Every member of the *Pawi* and *Mara* communities worked towards being such a hero. When faced with external aggression, the members of the community depended on their heroes. As it is a dance of warriors, celebrating victory in war, there are no accompanying songs. The *Khuang*,

Darbenthek and *Darkhuang* are used to keep the beat. Boys and girls dressed in colourful traditional costumes, form a circle. The leader, dressed in his warrior's costume, stands in the middle of the formation, brandishing a sword and shield. The dance recaptures the actions of a hero at war.





CHAWNGLAIZAWN DANCE

The *Chawnglaizawn* dance is another popular folk dance of the *Pawi* community of Mizoram. The dance is performed on the occasion of different festivals and also to celebrate a successful hunt. This community dance is performed by a large number of dancers. Boys and girls standing in rows dance to the beat of the *Khuang*. Shawls kept over the shoulders add colour to the dance during the movement of the arms. Drums are the only musical accompaniments of this dance, which is also known as *Pawi Chawiiglaizawii*.



CHAI

Chai is a popular dance performed on the occasion of *Chapchar Kut*, an important festival of the *Mizos*. In this dance, men and women stand alternately in circles, the women hold the men's waists and the men affectionately have their arms on the women's shoulders. The musicians are in the middle of the circle with their drum and *Mithun's* horn. The musician who plays the drum choreographs the dance, while the one who plays the *Mithun's* horn also chants the lyrics of the *Chai* song. The performance begins with the drummer beginning to beat the drum. At the fourth beat of the drum, the singers begin singing the *Chai* song. The dancers sway rhythmically in accordance with the beats of the drum. The dancers sing as they dance and use only a few musical instruments.





CHAWNLAM

Simple yet graceful, the *Chawnlam* is an entertaining community dance of the *Hmars*, performed during the festival of *Sechhun Khuangchawi* and to welcome important guests. The men and women stand alternately, forming a circle, with the drummer and the singer occupying the middle of the circle. The dance movements are simple and few, with the dancers swaying their legs from left to right and vice versa.



The men are attired in the *tual*, *kawr*, *puanngo*, *pawndum* and the *ngotekherh* and the women wear the *tualkawr*, *pawndum* and *ngotekherh*. The traditional hand-woven Mizo cloth, the *pawndum* is wrapped around the shoulders of the dancers and held with the hands.

TLAGLAM DANCE



A popular community dance, the *Tlaglam* dance is widely performed across the state and is an expression of the happy and carefree spirit of the Mizos. Several varieties of the dance have evolved, based on the music traditions of the state. The men and women dancers, dressed in colourful traditional attire and headgear (men wear the *tualkawr*, *pawndum* and *ngotekherh* and women wear the *kawrchei*, *tual war* and *puanchei*) are accompanied by musicians playing indigenous musical instruments like the *Khuang* and *Mithuns* horn.



Nagaland

DANCES OF THE AO NAGAS

MOATSU TSUNGSANG

Moatsu is an important festival of the *Ao Naga* tribe, celebrated in May, during the sowing season. From time immemorial, the *Ao Nagas* have celebrated this festival to propitiate the gods of nature and invoke their blessings for a plentiful harvest. Like all other dance forms of the *Ao Nagas*, the dance is performed to the accompaniment of continuous chanting by the performers. The entire community is involved in the preparations for this six day long festival. Singing and dancing is an important part of the *Moatsu* festival. The dancers are dressed in their traditional finery – the headgear is decorated with bear fur and hornbill feathers and embellished with wild boar



tusks; sashes are decorated with orchids; armlets, wrist bands and other jewellery are made of ivory. The dancers



move around in a circle, facing outwards, to display their ethnic splendour. From time to time, a dancer breaks away from the circle to present a display in jumping and sword twirling. The *Moatsu Tsungsang* presentation consists of two parts – in the first part, *Sangbangtur*, the attractive men of the *Ao Naga* community are compared to the beauty of the *sangbang* berries – the second part, *Ango Kazu* or Fish dance, has the dancers moving swiftly in a column of four formations, mimicking the gestures and movements of fish swimming in water. These unique dance compositions and dance movements make *Moatsu Tsungsang* a very interesting dance presentation.

NAKNARAR TSUNGSANG DANCE



Naknarar Tsungsang is an aesthetic and emotive dance of the *Ao Naga* tribe, which is known for its singing and dancing. Literally translated, *Naknarar Tsungsang* means 'Lovers' Dance', and this dance is performed by young men and women at various social events and on festive occasions. The youngsters gather at a *Morung*, which is like a community centre, and celebrate their new found love through singing and dancing. The performers are usually lovers or young people who have reached marriageable age and are in the process of getting to know each other better. Through the performance of this dance the young people express their feelings for their beloveds.

ARCHU TASEN

In other parts of the country people wait for occasions to celebrate, but in Nagaland the occasion is life itself. Singing and dancing are an integral part of all their celebrations. In the evenings they all gather at the *Morungs*, to indulge in fun and frolic. This dance is performed by the *Ao Naga* tribe at the inauguration of a new *Morung*. As the *Morung*



symbolizes feelings of brotherhood and oneness within the community, it is dedicated to the members of the community and this is an occasion to celebrate.

ALUYIMER TSUNGSANG

On completion of the sowing of seeds, the young boys and girls of the *Ao Naga* tribe get together and express their hopes for a rich harvest through joyous singing and dancing.



WADIR NAGA DANCE (WARRIOR'S DANCE)



The *Wadir Naga* dance is regarded as one of the most respectful dances of the *Ao Naga* tribe. The dance is performed in front of a warrior's house. The warrior has brought fame and glory to the village by bringing home the severed head of the enemy as a war trophy. The villagers pay their respect to the warrior for saving the village from enemy attack. In this dance, the thumping of the feet by the dancers symbolizes the crushing of the enemy force. Holding daos in their hands, the dancers exhibit many interesting and intricate movements.

COCK FIGHT

This lively and fierce dance uses the spear movement technique, while mimicking the cock fight. The accompanying drummers play a spectrum of rhythms to enliven the performance.





WAR DANCE OF CHANG NAGA TRIBE

The War dance of the *Chang Nagas* has its roots in the ancient warrior traditions of the tribe. During their head hunting days, the *Chang* tribesmen would sometimes establish new villages. The first step in this process, before building any houses, would be to construct a *Morung*. The tribesmen would then go on a head hunting raid and use the severed heads of the enemies to decorate the *Morung*. The victorious warriors on returning home, would perform the War dance, holding hands and standing in a circle, taking small rhythmic steps. For the performance, the dancers are dressed in the warrior's attire that includes shawls, headgear, conch earrings and beaded necklaces, embellished with tiger teeth. They wield a scabbard and a *dao* or short sword. They also wear a shin guard made of bear skin. Chanting, yelling and war cries accompany the dancing and the tribesmen also sing about their brave feats.

AKOK KHI

The *Akok Khi* dance is regarded as one of the most solemn dances of the *Sangeim* tribe. Holding hands, the men and women perform the *Akok Khi* dance during ceremonial festivals like *Among Mong*. The *Among Mong* festival is a prayer festival in which the God of the

House and the Three Cooking Stones of the kitchen are worshipped. The villagers gather together in the open fields and perform this community dance.

MUNGYANTA HARVEST DANCE



The *Mungyanta* Harvest dance is performed by the womenfolk of the *Kyong* or *Lotha* tribe during the *Tokhu Emong* Festival, a post harvest festival of the tribe. The dance is an expression of solidarity and brotherhood amongst the community. The *Lothas* believe that even if they have had a plentiful harvest, or have all the material comforts of the world, their happiness is incomplete if they cannot love each other and bond with every member of the tribe. Through this dance, they share their love and blessings with all and celebrate the end of a year's hard work.

THSOTHSE

Thsothe is the dance of the young unmarried girls of the *Pochury Naga* tribe. These girls are enjoying their carefree existence, which they know will end soon, when they get married and have to take on the responsibility of a household. Dressed in traditional attire, with a blue cloth wrapped around the upper part of their bodies and wrap-around skirts, the girls perform this dance in groups of 15 to 30 dancers. The accessories worn by the dancers include earrings, head bands and bead necklaces. Interlinking their arms, the girls



Interlinking their arms, the girls dance in simple rhythmic steps, accompanied by a subdued chant. Though the dance is simple, the dancers need to be sensitive to rhythm in order to perform the dance perfectly.

NAZU DANCE

Nazu is one of the most important festivals of the *Pochury* tribe of Nagaland, whose native territory is in the eastern part of Phek district. This ten-day festival, celebrated in February, is a time for merry making. The *Pochury* tribe is a composite tribe formed by three Naga communities, namely *Kupo*, *Kuchu*, and *Khuri*. According to *Pochury* legends, these tribes living in the neighbouring villages, constantly fought battles against each other, but united into a single tribe, after peace talks were held among the elders of the villages. Migrants from the *Sangtam* and *Rengma* tribes have also been absorbed in the *Pochury* group.

The *Nazu* festival, celebrated just before the sowing of seeds, is accompanied by singing and dancing, which is both



entertaining and ritualistic. Dressed in traditional attire, the dances are noted for the harmonious movements of the hands and legs and are accompanied by melodious tribal songs of different beats and tunes.





DANCES OF THE RONGMEI NAGAS

Dances are an integral part of all festivals of the *Rongmei Naga* community. Dances are different for the different festivals and different occasions.

Matri Lam is performed at a festival celebrated by the younger members of the community. The festival is hosted by one village and the young people of other villages are invited. This conference of the youth is celebrated in the last week of December. The celebrations continue for three consecutive days. Feasting, dancing and merrymaking are an important part of the festival.

Gan-Ngai or **Winter Festival** is the grandest festival celebrated by the *Rongmei Nagas*. This festival of thanksgiving is celebrated in the months

of December or January – the actual dates depend on the sighting of the moon. The celebrations continue for seven consecutive days. Traditional sports like long jump, wrestling and shot put are played. As in all festivities of the community, singing and dancing play an important role.

Thuanmei Lam, another colourful dance of the *Rongmei Naga* community, a dance of prayer and praise, is performed as a traditional welcome dance. This dance is



also performed to celebrate success and to offer congratulations. The dance, accompanied by drums and cymbals, begins and ends in a slow rhythm.

REMU NYE PHETO

The *Remu Nye Pheto* dance is performed by the *Chakhesang* tribesmen during the *Tsukhenyi* festival, after the seeds for the new crop have been sown. The *Chakhesang* tribesmen enter the performance arena in a single file, chanting all the while, and form a circle. The dance begins only when the dancers receive the command



from the troupe leader. The men and women are attired in their traditional finery – the men wear a bear skin coronet, earrings and necklaces; the women wear the traditional skirt, a piece of black cloth around their waists and traditional jewellery. The movements of the dancers are rhythmic and synchronised. The dancers clap their hands to the right and to the left, simultaneously stamping their feet, as they move along.

NGADA NDYUE NJEN

The *Ngada Ndyue Njen* dance of the *Rengma Naga* community is performed during the *Ngada* festival, which is celebrated after the harvesting of crops. Chanting sounds, folk tunes, war cries and yelling accompany the dance. Yells express excitement, challenge and delight in victory. The dance troupe is led by a dancer who wields the ceremonial *dao*. The different movements such as stamping the ground, jumping and flexible zig-zag movements reflect the strength, flexibility and alertness of the dancers who represent the warriors. The main movement of the dance consists of three



stamps on the ground with the right foot, followed by a jump forward with the left. The traditional costume worn by the dancers includes shawls, sashes, aprons, leg-guards, necklaces, earrings, decorated head gear etc. The dance is a depiction of the unity of the tribe and an expression of their happiness at the sight of the bountiful harvest.

BAI DIMA

The *Bai Dima* is a very colourful dance of the *Dimasa* and *Kachari* tribes performed at community festivals by both men and women to welcome guests. Wearing traditional attire, the men and the women dance to the music of the *Bin*, *Suphen*, *Muree* and *Khram*. Three kinds of movements are incorporated in the dance – the first, *Lama Hemba* meaning to walk; the second, *Madai Khilimba*, meaning bowing down before the Almighty in prayer and the third *Jaoba* meaning sailing. The significance of these movements is walking, praying and sailing together in joy and harmony.



SHEKUO

The *Shekuo* is the war dance of the *Khiamniungan Naga* community. Before setting out for a head hunting raid, the *Khiamniungan Naga* warriors would perform this dance with great enthusiasm to motivate themselves. The dancers wear the traditional dress of the warriors of the tribe – shawls, decorated headgear, bead necklaces and ivory



armlets. Wielding a shield, spear and *dao*, the warriors form two rows, facing each other. With measured steps they move backwards and forwards and charge towards each other in a mock fight, and at the same time jump and stamp their feet on the ground. The dance ends with the dancers forming a circle, raising their weapons and letting out loud war shouts.

AOLENG DANCE

The *Konyak* Naga tribesmen perform the *Aoleng* dance at the *Aoleng* festival, celebrated to seek the blessings of the almighty spirit, *Wangwan*, after the sowing of the crops is completed. Dressed in their finery - the men wearing loincloths, conical headgear decorated with bear fur and carved conch shells, sashes, ivory armbands and wielding a *dao* – the women wearing skirts, brass bracelets and interesting bead accessories of necklaces and hair bands -- they stand in a circular formation, with the men and women positioned alternately and move with slow steps in this pastoral dance of the tribe.



WARRIOR DANCE OF PHOM NAGA TRIBE

To celebrate the homecoming of victorious warriors, the *Phom Nagas* perform the Warrior dance. The warriors return from the battlefield in a procession, letting out shouts of joy, and re-enacting their war techniques. Dressed in the traditional dress of the *Phom Naga* warriors, comprising cane headgear, ivory armbands, carved conch shell earrings etc., they display quick and sharp reflexes, the most important skill of warriors, and also demonstrate their dexterity and competence in handling the weapons.

RULOU DANCE

A very colourful and popular dance of the *Angami Naga* tribe, *Rulou* is performed during festivals and social ceremonies of the tribe. Large groups of young boys and girls, dressed in traditional attire, gather in the open fields and mimic the movements of several birds and animals as they make circular and serpentine formations. The dancers are the singers too, and the songs are interspersed with shrill yodelling by the men as an expression of joy.



SAGOL PHEIKHAI



In *Kuki* language, *Sagol* means a wild boar and *Pheikhai* means the rhythmic movement of the limbs of the wild boars when they march together in a group. The *Sagol Pheikhai*, thus, is a dance that mimics the gestures and movements of the wild boars. The dance is performed on festive occasions, by a group of about 30 men and women,

accompanied by the music of the drums, gongs and *Gosem*. The women wear a skirt wrapped from the upper part of the body, secured with a band of white woven cloth, brass armllets and bracelets. The men wear the traditional shawl of the tribe, a short dhoti and a turban made of bamboo and dyed cotton threads.

MONGMONG FESTIVAL DANCE



The *Mongmong* Festival dance, a harvest dance, is performed by the members of the *Sangtam Naga* tribe. Holding each others' hands, the dancers form a long line – the leader is on the right of this line and the young boys are at the extreme left. The movements are uncomplicated – a step to the right, a short step back, a flex of the knees and two stamps with the right foot. The

leader leads the line into many formations of curves, finally forming a spiral and then unwinding the same.

SAULILI



Saulili or *Imupi Sujo* is an indigenous game belonging to the *Sumi Naga* tribe of Nagaland. The game which has been stylised into a dance has the underlying message of brotherhood and unity. Young boys of the community form a chain of people bound together, signifying cooperation, love and harmony. The dance is performed during all festivals especially the *Tuluni* festival, celebrated after completion of the cultivation work, as they wait for the

harvest. The dance is also performed to celebrate victory in war. The warriors dressed in colourful costumes gather at the residence of the village chief to display their war trophies and to perform this dance of celebration. Through this dance they also assure the villagers that they would always ensure full security and protection for them.

APHILO KUWO

Aphilo Kuwo is a dance of the *Sumi Naga* tribe. It is performed on festive occasions. The performance of the dance is based on a beautiful legend. One day, a *Sumi Naga* tribesman, *Rotoki*, living in *Chisholimi* village, took his son, *Khumtsa*, with him to the jungle. A storm arose and a tree was uprooted, separating father and son. In this situation, *Khumtsa* was abducted by the spirits. *Rokoti* made every attempt to find his son, but to no avail. He returned home and informed his wife about the incident and they both wept for days,



mourning the loss of their only son. However, one night, the boy returned home and told his parents how the spirits had abducted him and taken him away to an unknown

land. He further informed them that the spirits would be visiting their village after seven days, and a feast should be organized for them. The villagers should all stay home and refrain from looking out, during the visit. On the appointed day the spirits arrived and as they were leaving, the villagers peeped out of their windows to watch the spirits, dressed in colourful attire, dancing up the hill, away from the village. *Aphilo Kuwo* replicates the costumes and dance of these mythical spirits.

DANCES OF THE ZEME COMMUNITY



HECHA LIM (PYTHON DANCE)

The *Hecha Lim* or the Python dance is a popular dance of the *Zeme* community. The *Zemes* are a peace loving community and their dances reflect their devotion to peace. This is a dance of joy and

happiness. The young and the old come together to enjoy themselves. The dance begins in a single file. They also end the dance in a single line – the formation resembles the python and hence the name of the dance.

NKUI LIM (HONEYBEE DANCE)

The *Nkui Lim* or Honeybee dance is another interesting dance of the *Zeme* community. The honeybee fleets from flower to flower drinking nectar. The movements of the dancers are as dainty and delicate as those of the honeybee.

NGAINE LIM (SWALLOW DANCE)

The swallow is a bird that always flies in the sky in groups. The young dancers of the *Zeme* tribe imitate the swallow in their lively and energetic movements.

HERE LIM (HORNBILL DANCE)

The *Here Lim* dance of the *Zeme* tribe reflects the community's devotion to peace and harmony. The dance is performed by the young boys and girls of the community, dressed in traditional finery, on all happy

occasions and festivals. The hornbill is regarded as a sacred bird and admired for its noble disposition and majestic temperament. Through this dance, the dignified movements of the hornbill are captured, and the admiration and respect for the bird is also portrayed.

ROINA DANCE

Many traditional dances of Nagaland imitate the different forms, gestures and graceful movements of animals and birds. This particular dance calls upon the youth to be adorned in their beautiful costumes and to dance like the skylark, which hovers in the sky and lands merrily on the ground.





Sikkim



DANCES OF THE LEPCHA COMMUNITY

The *Lepchas* are the original inhabitants of Sikkim and they are mostly settled in north Sikkim. They were there much before the *Bhutias* and *Nepalese* migrated to the state. Before adopting Buddhism or Christianity as their religion, the earliest *Lepcha* settlers were believers of a faith based on spirits, good and bad. They worshipped the spirits of the mountains, rivers and forests, which was but natural for a

tribe that co-existed so harmoniously with the rich natural surroundings. Since they believe that they were lovingly created by Mother Nature, they proudly call themselves *Mutanchi Rongkup* or Mother's Loved Ones. The *Lepchas* have several interesting dances. In the *Kinchum-Chu-Bomsa* dance, the scenic beauty of Sikkim is beautifully



expressed. The *Lepchas* of Sikkim thank God for their beautiful land – *Ney Mayal Lyang* – which means a hidden paradise on earth. *Chu Faat* is another ancient dance of the *Lepcha* community of Sikkim, performed in honour of Kanchanjunga and its four associate peaks. The dance is performed every year on the fifteenth day of the seventh month of the lunar calendar. *Zo Mal Lok* portrays the sowing and subsequent harvesting of

paddy and is performed by the *Lepcha* farmers to reduce the drudgery and monotony of working in the fields. *Damsang-Lyang* is also performed when the community is busy with agricultural

activities. To lessen the burden of their work, they go around the villages singing and dancing. Through the dances, they depict the graceful movements of different birds and insects. In the *Sekmario* dance, performed during the annual *Nambun* celebrations, young boys and girls dance with love and joy in their hearts.

DANCES OF THE BHUTIA COMMUNITY

The *Bhutias* are among the early settlers of Sikkim and have retained their own traditions and culture. Folk songs and dances form a vital part of their culture. Some of these songs describe the beauty of the natural surroundings, some depict the harvest season, some are songs of joy and happiness, love and longing, and others are performed for good luck and prosperity. Earlier, these songs and dances were performed in the courtyards of family homes or in a cleared area on the slopes of the mountains. The singing and dancing have been modified to a certain extent to make it suitable for stage presentations. The musical instrument *Nang* is an integral part of the music and dance traditions of the *Bhutia* community.

The dances are varied and beautiful. The *Tashi Sabdo*, performed by young boys and girls, wearing white scarves called *Khadas*, that signify purity, prosperity and peace, is performed on all special occasions. The *Lu Khangthamo* is performed to thank the gods and deities of the three worlds - heaven, earth and hell. Accompanied by melodious songs, the dance is performed on all happy occasions like new year celebrations and house-warming parties. The *Chi Rimu* dance, in which all members of the



community participate irrespective of age, describes the scenic beauty of Sikkim. The *Gnungmala Gnunghey* dances are based on devotional



songs and hymns, and the *Be Yu Mista* dance describes the natural beauty of Sikkim. The *Pang-Ke-Mintoko* dance celebrates the beauty of nature, of the blooming of yellow flowers in the green valleys of Sikkim. These flowers are considered a sign of good fortune and held in great reverence. Brides and grooms offer it to each other at the time of marriage.

YAK CHHAM

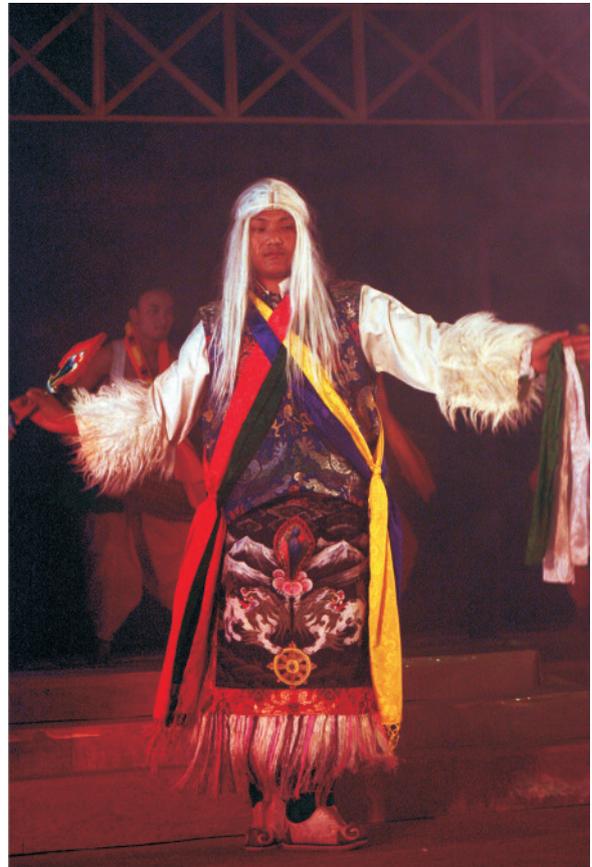


High in the mountains, the Sikkimese herdsman's best friend on the ragged slopes is the yak. The yak is his sole means of transportation, besides providing him with milk and meat for sustenance during the long winter months. Its rich mane is woven into cloth that protects him from the biting cold, its rich milk is churned into cheese and butter and its rich fibre is woven into blankets. This dance depicts the movements of the yak and the simple lifestyle of the herdsman of the mountains. The dancers don the costume and mask of the yak, and tune their steps to traditional songs and instrumental music.

SINGHI CHHAM



Mount *Khan-chen Dzongpa* (Kanchanjunga) is the third highest mountain in the world. This towering creation of nature is sacred to the people of Sikkim. It has been decreed the guardian deity of Sikkim by *Guru Rimpoche*. This majestic mountain stands guard over the land holding in its crevices the sacred mountain peaks known as the Five Treasures. Its associate peaks look like the legendary snow lion, fierce and fiery, with a gorgeous mane hued in turquoise. The snow lion is considered an important cultural symbol of the state and is elaborately depicted in the *Singhi Chham*



or the Snow Lion dance. The snow lion is a mythical animal. The Sikkimese people believe that if one sights the animal it brings good luck. This cultural symbol of good luck comes alive in this dance.



DANCES OF THE NEPALI COMMUNITY



The *Nepalese*, the most recent of Sikkim's settlers, are now the dominant community, and their customs pervade everyday life, lending an unusual dimension to the state's already quaint mix of traditions, attire, religion and language. Folk songs and dances, which embody the colours and sounds of the mountains, form an integral part of Nepalese culture.

Tamang Selo is a traditional Sikkimese folk dance patronised by the *Tamang* community of the state. The *Tamangs* are an important unit of the *Nepalese* social structure, a community that has contributed immensely to popularizing the *Nepalese* performing arts. *Tamang* songs, known as 'Hwai' in *Tamang* language, are replete with the whole gamut of human emotions and are so



popular that without a *Tamang Hwai*, no Nepali festive occasion is considered complete. A traditional musical instrument of the *Tamangs*, called the *Damphu*, accompanies the dance, and so the dance is also referred to as the ***Damphu Naach***. This spellbinding, robust, foot tapping dance, which is full of fun and vigour, depicts the colourful lifestyle of the Nepalese community of Sikkim. It is performed during the *Dasain* or *Dusserah* festival, and expresses the joy and happiness of the people. The young and old come together to take part in the dance.

The ***Maruni*** is a rare dance form that has its roots in ancient Nepalese culture. The songs that accompany this dance have a variety of themes ranging from mythology to everyday life. While some depict heroic events from the lives of Lord *Rama*, Lord *Krishna*, Lord *Shiva*, and other gods of the Hindu pantheon, others deal with simple day-to-day incidents of the people of the land. The dancers move rhythmically, balancing copper *thaalis* on their palms with lit *diyas* arranged on them.





The **Ghantu** dance is a Sikkimese folk dance patronised by the *Gurung* community of the state. This ancient folk dance form depicts the happy and carefree lifestyle of the people of the land. The dance, which is full of fun and vigour is performed by young girls in traditional costumes and headgear.





Tripura

DANCES OF THE TRIPURI COMMUNITY

The *Tripuris* are the original inhabitants of the Kingdom of Tripura in Bangladesh and north-east India. They live on the slopes of hills in groups of five to fifty families. They are a part of the Tibeto-Burmese ethnic group, who originally migrated from the upper courses of the Yangtze Kiang and Hwang Ho rivers in western China.

GARIA DANCE

The *Tripuri* tribesmen are the largest tribal community of the state. The life and culture of the *Tripuris* revolve around *Jhum*, or shift cultivation, as agriculture is the main source of livelihood and the mainstay of their lives. *Jhum*, involves selecting a piece of land and clearing it, after which the seeds are sown. By mid-April, when this process is completed, the farmers pray to *Baba Garia*, the god of good harvests. The *Garia* dance depicts the rituals of the *Garia Puja* as well as the stages in *Jhum* cultivation. The men, wearing *dhoti* and *kurta* and the women donning the traditional attire of *pachra* and *risa*, present this lively dance synchronizing their footsteps to the beat of drums.



MAMITA

The *Mamita* dance is performed by the *Tripuri* people on the occasion of the *Mamita* festival, the harvest festival of the state. In the months of October and November, during the *Mai Kwtal Chamani*, or harvesting of *Jhum* cultivation, the people are in a joyful mood. After completing their work in the fields during the day, young men and women of the village gather together in the evenings to sing and dance to express their happiness. The

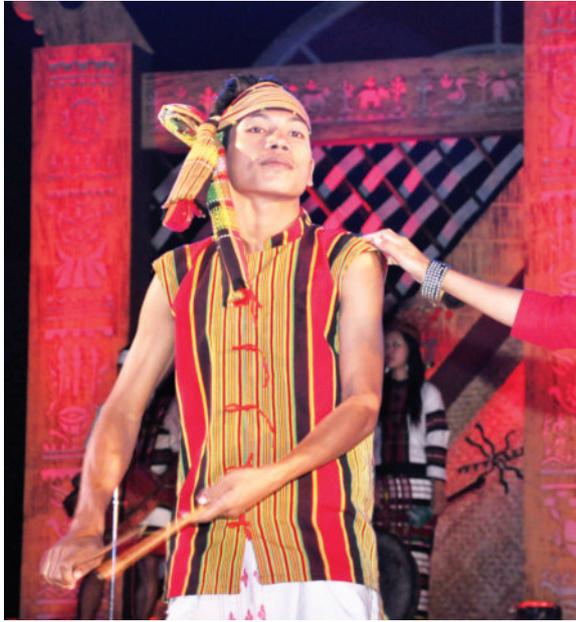


loud singing and rhythmic dancing continues till well past midnight. As they move from house to house in the village spreading the message of love and peace, the heads of the families they visit, come out to acknowledge them and to give them token gifts.

LEBANG BOOMANI DANCE

After the *Garia Puja*, the *Tripuri* tribesmen patiently await the arrival of the monsoons. During this time, flocks of colourful insects called *lebangs* are seen on the hill slopes, searching for the newly sown seeds. The young boys and girls rush out to catch the *lebangs*. In this dance, the dancers aesthetically depict how bamboo clappers are used to catch the colourful insects. It is believed that the number of *lebangs* caught signifies how good the year's harvest will be. The dance is performed by men as well as women. The men clap





the *tokkas* or bamboo clappers while the women join the circle waving colourful scarves. The dance is performed to the accompaniment of the *Sarinala*, *Wakhok* and *Sumui*.

GALAMUCHAMO

The *Tripuri* community performs this dance at the end of the harvesting season. Through the dance the members of the community express their gratitude to the gods for a good harvest. The *Galamuchamo* dance is performed by dancers dressed in traditional attire. The musical instruments played during the dance are typical to Tripura.

BIZU DANCE

The *Chakmas* form a major part of the tribal population of Tripura. The *Bizu* dance is a distinctive dance of the *Chakma* community. *Bizu* means *Chaitra Sankranti* or the end of the Bengali calendar year. Through the *Bizu* dance, the members of this community bid good-bye to the year that has just ended and usher in the new year. In its erstwhile form, the *Bizu* dance was performed within the grounds of temples, though today, it has gained popularity as a group dance. The dancers make rectangular and circular formations during the presentation. The dance is beautifully orchestrated to the rhythm of typical folk instruments of Tripura like *Dhol* or drum, *Baqjhi* or flute, *Hengrang*, a musical instrument made from bamboo and *Dhuduk*, an instrument similar to the *Hengrang*.



HOZAGIRI

Next to the *Tripuris*, the *Reangs* constitute the second biggest group among the tribal population of Tripura. Their primary occupation is agriculture. They sometimes refer to themselves as *Bru* and they speak the *Reang* dialect of *Kokborok*, which is called *Kaubru*. The *Reangs*, like other tribal communities, have a distinct art and culture of their own. Dance and music form an integral part of their lives. While the themes of the dances remain almost the same as the other tribes, the dance form of the *Reang* community is quite different from the others. The movement of the hands and the upper part of the body is somewhat restricted, whereas the movement from the waist to the feet creates a wonderful wave. The dancer stands on an earthen pitcher with a bottle on her head. A lighted lamp is balanced on the bottle.

The *Reang* dancers bend and twist the lower parts of their bodies in a rhythmic fashion, without disturbing the bottle and the lighted *diya*. This dance is performed during a festival celebrated



annually in the month of April, just before the selection of a site for *Jhum*, to pray to *Mainuma*, the goddess of wealth. The *Reangs* believe that if the goddess is pleased with the singing and dancing, she will bless them with bumper crops.



MOLSOM SONGS AND DANCES

The *Molsoms* are a sub-tribe of the *Halam* community. There is no recorded history of where the *Molsoms* came from, how they came and when they settled in Tripura. They belong to the Indo-Mongolian racial family and are culturally closely linked to the *Tripuris*. In recent times, they are found in settlements in Udaipur, Amarpur, Sonamura, Sardar, Khowai, Gandachara and Kamalpur sub-divisions of the state.

The *Molsoms* have their indigenous dances and music which they have guarded fiercely. Their stage presentations usually begin with a prayer dance dedicated to their indigenous god *Sengrek*. As agriculture is their main occupation, the dance depicting the entire process of *Jhum* or



shift cultivation is very interesting, particularly the striking of a fire by friction between pieces of bamboo is quite spectacular.

The community celebrates the harvest of a new *jhum* crop with the *Haihak Lam* dance.

HAI HAK DANCE

The *Hai Hak* dance is another dance connected with *Jhum* cultivation and is performed by the *Halam* community, whose life too revolves around *jhum* cultivation. At the end of the harvesting season, the members of the *Halam* community invoke the blessings of goddess *Lakshmi*, through a number of rituals. They perform the *Hai Hak* dance as part of the festivities. Wearing the traditional costume of the *Halam* tribe, the dance is performed in a circular formation.

Accompanied by the music of the *Khum*, *Sumui*, *Champrel*, *Kartal* and *Dhangu*, the *Hai Hak Lam* dance is performed during the *Sarbing* ceremony, by the *Molsom* community, when the new crop is cooked and eaten for the first time.



NAHCHU MATAI PUJA DANCE

The *Nahchu Matai Puja* dance is performed by the *Jamatia* tribesmen, on *Chaitra Sankranti*, as a part of the worship of *Nahchu Matai*, the goddess of snakes. The *Jamatiyas* belong to west and south Tripura. They are physically strong and courageous and for this reason many of them were inducted into the king's royal force. As in most tribal cultures, the *Jamatiys* too perform several dances as they go about their daily lives. Though they are secular in their outlook, they have some worshipping rituals that they follow to protect themselves from harm, and worship of *Nahchu Matai* is one of these rituals.

DANCES OF THE MOG COMMUNITY

Tripura has several diverse ethno-linguistic groups and this has given rise to a composite culture. The *Mog* community is a peace loving community, who have their own rich heritage of music and dance.



SANGRAI



Sangrai is a special festival of Tripura. During this three-day festival, the younger members of the *Mog* community move from house to house carrying the pious *Kalpataru* (wish-yielding tree) on their heads. This ceremony features singing as well as dancing. Water is carried in an auspicious pitcher and the elders of the community bathe with this water. Fragrant sandalwood paste is applied to the entrances of the houses in the village and the water of green coconuts is sprinkled on every

house. In a grand ceremony fragrant water is poured on the roots of the *Bodhi Vriksha*. The dance is performed to the accompaniment of a traditional *Khouyang*.



FISHERMEN'S DANCE

For the *Mog* community, besides agriculture, fishing is also an important means of livelihood. Using the *Sudha* and *Dulla*, which are different kinds of traps and baskets, they catch the fish. At the end of the day the catch is shared equally amongst everyone. The entire process is very artistically depicted in the Fishermen's dance.



WYA DANCE

The *Mog* community of Tripura celebrates the *Wya* festival on the full-moon night of the month of *Ashwin* of the Bengali calendar year. Young boys and girls stand in rows with lamps in their hands to pray to Lord Buddha. After the worship, they sing and dance on the premises of the Buddha temple. This traditional dance is known as the *Wya* dance or the Lamp dance.



YAKOUNG KADIMA DANCE

Though the *Rupini* community of Tripura had embraced *Shaivism* a long time ago, the culture of the Aryans did not have any bearing on their daily lives. On the contrary, they developed a spontaneous folk culture. The *Yakoung Kadima* dance is performed by the *Rupini* community to welcome the season of autumn. The cultivators thresh their harvest at night

and use the sound of the threshing as music for singing and dancing. The men wear the *tau borok dhoti* and *kanchili* and the women are dressed in the traditional attire of *rwasa* and *pawnzel*. They bring joy into their work by singing and dancing.

MOSOK SUMANI DANCE

The *Mosok Sumani* dance of the *Noatia* community depicts the process of hunting the *mosok*, a rare breed of deer. The *Noatias* live in the hills of Dhalai and north Tripura. In winter, the *mosoks* come to the empty clearings created for *jhum* cultivation, to escape the chill of the season. The meat of the *mosok* is a delicacy in the community, but hunting this deer requires great skill on the part of the hunter. In this dance, the tribesmen depict the styles and techniques of hunting the *mosok* through expressive gestures and rhythmic dancing.







Eastern Zonal Cultural Centre

MINISTRY OF CULTURE, GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

Aikatan, IA-290, Sector - III, Salt Lake City, Kolkata - 700 097

Bharatiyam Cultural Multiplex, IB-201, Sector - III, Salt Lake City, Kolkata - 700 106

Srijani Shilpagram, V/45 Road, near Kalisayar, PO: Santiniketan, Dist.: Birbhum 731 235

E-mail: directorezccolkata@gmail.com | ezccolkataprogram@yahoo.in | Website: www.ezcc-india.org