

The Unique Identity of Ghumura: A Folk Dance of Odisha

Dr. Ashis Mohapatra

Guest Faculty, Culture Studies Department, Utkal University Of Culture, India

ABSTRACT: *Ghumura Dance (or Ghumra Dance) is one of the most leading folk dance forms Kalahandi district of Odisha. It is classified as folk dance as the dress code of Ghumura resembles more like a tribal dance. GHUMRA IS the indigenous dance of Kalahandi and its origin can be traced to the Indrāvati Peninsula. The tribals of Kalahandi mainly perform this dance during religious and traditional festivals like Nuakhai or Dasahara. Nissan, Jhaanja, Mahuri, Mardal are some of the musical instruments accompanied with the Ghumura dance. This is a male dance, performed by 15 to 40 persons. The Gond, Kond, and Bhatras tribes traditionally perform this dance. Though it is considered as the folk dance, characteristics of classical form prevail in every aspect of the Ghumura dance—such as in the singer, dancer and in the beats of Nissan player. Ghumura plays an important role at the time of different cultural and religious festivals in Kalahandi and Koshal region. Ghumura is a particular variety of drum, which is approximately the size of a pitcher and generates a deep musical sound.*

KEYWORDS – *ODISHA, GHUMURA, KALAHANDI, FOLK DANCE, INSTRUMENT*

Introduction

Folk art, drama, dance and songs etc. have nourished a rich cultural tradition in Odisha. Though many of them have become extinct and some are languishing, still there are surviving expressions preserved and fostered by the rural folk. Each of the folk arts whether song, dance or drama presents numerous varieties each distinctive because of its character, occasion, style and presentation. There are songs forms the cradle to the grave. There are dances beginning from merry-making to martial activities and there are folk plays depicting various episodes from mythology, history and legend, which inspire the people and help to keep up their morale. Odisha has the distinction of possessing rich folk culture in all its aspects, spreading in various folk communities from one end to the other, communicating to the mass its past tradition in the present day setting and shaping folk life to its tune. 'Ghumura' a popular Odishan folk dance is considered as sign of heritage of Kalahandi district. The 'Ghumura' is a kind of drum which produces a deep musical sound. Singers sing and dance to the tune of Ghumura at social functions and religious festivals. Sometimes a competition is held between two parties. Each party consists of twenty to twenty-five men. The Ghumura is hung on the neck of the drummers, with the support of rope and therefore is easier to play upon. Once the drummer starts drumming the Ghumura, singing and dancing erupts on the scene. It was used during war times in the past to encourage soldiers. It is also used to give social message like forestation, saving girl child, literacy etc. The dance performed to the accompaniment of this drum is called Ghumura Naat. The name of this dance had been derived from the name of the musical instrument played along with this dance. 'Ghumura' is praised across Odisha and across India and across the world as well. It has also enriched the folk-dance tradition of Odisha. 'Ghumura' is also an identity of Kalahandi district. This is known as a 'Veera vadya' which means it represents valour and bravery of the warriors or when played, it boosts the morale of our soldiers. The sounds created by this musical instrument enhance the spirit of weak persons and brings out a feeling of strength and energy among the warriors. It can create a feeling of fear among the enemies. In the past, during the rule of 'rajās and maharajas' (kings and emperors) this musical instrument was approved as the military musical instrument. So as per the directions of the then rulers 'Ghumura' was played during the battle time. As per the tradition the 'Ghumura' performers first perform the puja-rituals of 'Ghumura' on the auspicious day of 'Chitalagi-Amabasya' and from then onwards practise 'Ghumura' every evening and starting from the day of 'Nuakhai' festival to Vijaya dashami' festival they use to perform 'Ghumura' at different places. Today the prevalence of 'Ghumura' is not only limited within the tribal dominated regions. But also has spread in many non-tribal regions. This is familiar as a 'Taala-vadya' musical instrument.

In the cultural organ Ghumura is the important folk art of Kalahandi. It's by the power of music, dance and song it take a separate identify in the world folk culture. We seen a mixing vibrant rhythm of music, song and dance one of uncommon heart touchable entertainment in the Ghumura dance. We know western region is the most popular of their Shaktism we find so many evidence of Ghumura and Shaktism which prove their glade

relation. We find each and every place hilly forest to surface area mother goddess worship. Tribal is the primary identify of every human being they dedicate their music, song and dance to their mother goddess, in this way Ghumura also dedicated her goddess worship. The performance begins with slow circular movements. The Nisan is a smaller variety of Kettle-drum played with two leather-sticks. The player always places himself in the centre and controls the tempo of the dance. He also indicates change over the movements. After a brief dance sequence in different rhythmic patterns all the dancers move in a concentric circle and then stand erect in a line. Then enters the singer who first sings in praise of Saraswati and other gods and goddesses. During the song the drums remain silent. After the prayer-song Chhanda, Chaupadi and other literary folk-songs are sung. Each couplet of a song is followed by a dance. At the end of the each couplet the singer adds 'Takita Dhe' which is a numeric syllable for the time-beats and indicates the dance to begin.

The folk art typical of the tribal and rural life is the spontaneous expression of the people shaped by them to suit own needs Ghumura is the popular folk dance found in between the rivers of Mahanadi and Indrāvati peninsular. The tribal people of Kalahandi, Koraput, Bolangir and total western Odisha predominantly perform the dance and also Odia speaking localities of Chhattisgarh. But Kalahandi is mainly known as the "Land of Ghumura". It is the dance performed predominantly by the Gond, Bhatras and Bhumia tribe of Kalahandi and Koraput district. It is all irrespective of caste and tribe. Earlier Ghumura was played by the typical mixed sound that comes out of the musical instrument like Ghumura, Nisan, Dhol, Tall, Maadal etc. And the experiences and moment of the artists make this dance to be a "HEROIC DANCE", this dance generates "VEERA RASA" so during those day if king rule it was used as a morale booster for the solders and thereby was known as "WAR DANCE". As the mixed sound becomes out the solders start getting excited and jump into the war field to achieve victory.



Figure 1. JHAL, Wonderful ornaments of Ghumura artist wearing on head with the Pagadi.

Ghumura is a dance where three aspects have intermingled. The music, dance and singing and song, acting are simultaneously displayed in this dance, so it is a difficult martial dance to perform.

GHUM+UU+RAA=GHUMURA, here, "Ghum" means an earthen pot, "Uu" means formation & "Raa" means sound. So the earthen pot from which sound of 'Ghum', 'Ghum' is formed is known as Ghumura, in the 'Madhya Parva' of "Sarala Mahabharata", this fact has been mentioned as

"Dhola Madala Gadi je Ghumura Bajai

Ghumura je Ghumu Ghumu Hoi Garajai"

Ghumura is the name of a musical instrument made of earthen pot. It is the two feet long hollow earthen pot the face of which is covered with the skin of monitor lizard & it is tied on the waist and left shoulder of the dancer. Ghumura is the long size instrument is used for the musical purpose. The signifies the Ghumura feminine counter part of Ghumuria is used and signifies the feminine counter part of Ghumura is used by the females and Ghumura, along shaped pictures used by the males for music. There are two opinions about the naming of 'Ghumura' musical instrument. The first portion is that as because this musical instrument creates the sounds like 'Ghum...Ghum...', hence the name 'Ghumura' is believed to have been formed this way. Another opinion is that 'Ghumura' is made of a clay-pot or pitcher. In Kalahandi district, the pot is called as 'Ghumuree'. So it also cannot be derived that the name 'Ghumura' had possibly Originated from the word 'Ghumuri'. When we talk

about the history of 'Ghumura origin the several hear says, mythological opinions and some written facts come to our notice. Besides this, in some age old ancient temples engravings there are pictures of 'Ghumura' which are lively examples. This was a 'Veera vadya' (use for bravery) musical instrument of Ravan the king of Lanka, and 'Lanka' (Srilanka today) was its birth place According to a legend, it is said that 'Ghumura' was born or Originated on the day 'Saptami' (seven day) of Odia 'Bhadrab' month (as per Odia almanac) in Mrugashiraxatra'. In the pre-historical relics of 'shaiva' culture, found in Maraguda of Kalahandi district indicate that in those days there was the prevalence of 'Ghumura' musical instrument. The ancient cave paintings found from the areas of Gudahandi and Jogi Matha indicate about some musical instrument which resembled like Dambaru and Ghumura. So it is assumed that the prevalence of 'Ghumura' musical instrument dates back to pre-historic period. The following lines excerpted from some ancient scriptures like Sarala-Mahabharata, Dandy Ramayana, Chandi Purana indicate about the 'Ghumura' musical instrument. The Ghumura songs acted as the war music to the Gods, then the kings and finally the soldiers at war. During the pre-independent era, the warriors were enticed by the Ghumura music and dance to enhance the spirit of fighting in them. It also helped them exercise and uplifted their spirits to fight for their rulers.



Figure 2. GHUMURA, The vital instrument: this instrument is the Ghumura its play by the Ghumura artist.

So far as the archeologically studies of Ghumura is concerned it is quite difficult to place the antiquity unless the accumulation of ethnographic data. The socio anthropological approach to the history is called ethno archaeology, which involves the study of social and cultural costumes, practices and the main equipment of the present day's tribes or the inhabitants of a locality as a guide to the understanding to the pattern and remains found in archeologically context. But it should keep in mind that all ethnographic data cannot be ethno-archaeology but all ethno archaeological data is ethnography. It is also known as living archaeology. The paintings displaying the Ghumura dance in the caves of the districts of Kalahandi and Nuapada mark its early existence. It is believed that the Ghumura dance was first performed in the river valley of Indrāvati and spread to the surrounding areas from there. There are several engravings at the Sun Temple of Konark, proving the performance of Ghumura dance in the medieval times. There are many variations or forms to the Ghumura dance such as Ghumura-Ladhei, Badi-Ghumura, Go Spada dance, Mesha Yudha dance, Chaki dance, Go Chanda dance, Kakuta Yudha dance etc. Ghumura dance is completely male oriented and there are no female participants in it. Archaeological facts also suggest that the history of Ghumura dance is old. In the past, it was performed in many Shaktipitha of Dakshina Koshal. Ghumura was found in the excavation of Nehenar. Also, in 1005 A. D, while Lankeswari deity was brought to Jenabaliapatna (modern Junagarh near Bhawanipatna, Ghumura was played to welcome the deity. The stone carving of Ghumura in the Bhimashwara temple, one of the oldest temples in Bhubaneswar, proves that the history of Ghumura is ancient.



Figure 3. NISHAN, Additional musical instrument in Ghumura blowing by Nissan artist

So the Ghumura can be presumed that it belong to such region and tribal people who are the ascendant of the earlier primitive social groups where many ancient costumes and tradition still survive among them in an unadulterated form. According to the scriptures, 'Ghumura' belongs to the 'Abanaddha' category of musical instruments. It is prepared from a clay pot or long necked pitcher of clay. In size of its open mouth is wider than its neck portion, but smaller than its knot portion. A tiny hole is there in the lower part of the pitcher. Normally the height of this clay pitcher is about 1.5 ft and the circumference of its mouth is about 7 to 8 fingers measurement, the height of pitcher is 7 fingers measurement and the trunk-portion's circumference is within 1 ft., its open mouth is covered with a leather of dragon lizard skin. Earlier the Ghumura artisans used a gum prepared from the paste of arum-leaves, black gram or catechu to attach the leather cover on the mouth of 'Ghumura'.

Originally Ghumura is a traditional and tribal group dance comprised of a group of dancer and tribal group dance comprised of a group of dancer and varieties of instruments, dress and costumes which look more attractive. It is associated with socio-religious function and still we can find this Ghumura culture among the tribal people in their respective region. The musical instrument for Ghumura dance made of earthen pot, which look looks a huge slackened 'Dambaru' and is thatched by iguana skin, Nissan covered by cow skin, cymbals Mrudanga, Tahia, dress, costumes etc. Which was used during the ancient period is still using (practising) by the present tribal societies. So the ethno archaeological study can prove it's real antiquity and culture with their predecessor, as because this ancient culture is still surviving in the present societies.

Ghumura dance it so unique form other dance and costume. This is the war dance both are demon and god are use it. In the Ghumura dance mainly focus of Ghumura artist costume and their musical instrument. So let us discuss Ghumura costume and instrument one by one. The rope tied with the knob of 'Ghumura' lower part is tied around the performer's waist and the two ropes attached with the face of 'Ghumura' is tied around the chests or shoulders of the performer. To perform this performer dangles the 'Ghumura' up to his belly portion and use to beat the mouth or surface of 'Ghumura' with his two hands. Generally the Ghumura performers use to perform the musical instruments in standing positions and also dance during their performances. The performers mainly use his Right -palm's fore-finger and middle finger and fore-finger of his left palm to play this musical instrument. The Ghumura trainee while learning the performing skills use to keep these musical instruments on their laps. The costumes worn by the Ghumura artists resemble those of the tribal folklore; hence, despite its movements being similar to that of some of the Indian classical dances, it remains a folk dance itself. The artists attach Ghumura or a typical drum to their chests and beat it with their hands, along with dancing. Therefore, the performer and the musician are the same in this dance. According to the scripture of 'Ghumura' musical instrument, the tunes of 'Taal's' called 'Triputta', 'AthaTaala', 'Khemta', 'EkaTaali' and 'JhulaTaala' are prevalently performed through 'Ghumura' musical instrument. Every 'Taal' comprises 'Prarambha', 'Madhya' and 'Shesha'. In 'Ghumura' these three stages or levels are called 'Uthana', 'KuTaana' and 'Chhindaana'. From use of different musical instruments separately or combined by in hunting life and to use in entertainment purpose, there was gradual improvement and transformations process the process is continuing one culminating into a form of marital bond with classical touch. The musical notes of Ghumura and associated musical instrument are played as per Indian classical Ragas. Ghumura artist wearing silk dress and dhoti, their dress prepared in different types of colour. They wear peacock feather and so many flower are hanging in head with the Pagadi on his head, they wear Ghungura on his leg, earring in his ear, and other ornament also they use to make his costume beautiful.

Traditionally Ghumura dance perform through several different dance forms like-Circular Dance, Circular or Semi-Circular Dance, Triangular Dance, Rectangular Dance, Go Spada Dance (Cow Foot Dance), Sheep Fighting Dance (Mesha Yudha Dance), Cross (Chaki) Dance, Square Dance, Go Chanda Dance, Hen Fighting (Kakuta Yudha) Dance form. The Ghumura artists used to dance while beating the Ghumura as per the music of the Nissan. Apart from these forms, some other forms like Mesa Yudha, Chakki, Kukuda Yudha, Chaturasra etc are also seen. Of course, at the time of the song of the singer too, the dancers used to act in various forms. At the time of beating Ghumura, the dancer moves all other parts of the body. But at the time of song, he used to show his talent through his hands in various forms like, invitation with rising the hands, beating the hands at various part of the body, clapping, tilting to the front, jerking the feet etc.



Figure 4. TALL, Additional musical instrument in Ghumura play by Talliea.

In Ghumura dance, apart from the artists with the Ghumura, the other artists with Nissan, Dhol, Maadal, Jhaler etc. and the singer too have certain role to play. Of course, except the role of the Nissan artist, the role of rest artists does not seem to be that much important. As the entire Ghumura dance is controlled as per the invitation of the Nissan artist and the sound of the Nissan; the music of the Nissan artist is considered to be more important as compared to the dance of the Nissan artist. Still the movement of the body like speedy stepping, attacking in invitation, brave look, quick jumping seem to be the movement of a soldier in the front line in a war and this makes the Ghumura dance more attractive. Ghumura dance is a package of social entertainment, relaxation of the mind, love for dance, devotion towards it and the **brotherhood that it promotes** amongst the various casts that come together to give the performance. This dance is associated traditionally with Nuakhai and Dasahara festivals in South Western Odisha. Ghumura dance is still hidden in the villages in South Western Odisha and parts of Andhra Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. Ghumura is still being recognized due to the efforts of some of the local enthusiasts. However, this heroic dance form is quite ahead of the similar folk dances of the state of Orissa. But it is relatively practiced more in the rural parts than in the urban arena. Kalahandi has taken a leading role in popularizing the unique identity of Ghumura dance. The Ghumura dance has represented the nation in various international events.

REFERENCES:

- [1] C. Pasayat, (Ed.), Paschima Odisara Lokageeta Folklore Foundation Bhubaneswar 2008.
- [2] Bhagyalaxmi Mahapatra, Ethnic Dances and Music of Western Orissa: An Anthropological Study Towards Promoting Eco-tourism Publishing Company, 2011.
- [3] Durga Kuanr Charan. *Orissa District Gazetteers*. Kalahandi Bhubaneswar.1980.
- [4] J. P. Singh Deo, . *Cultural Profile of South Kosala*. Gian Publishing. New Delhi.1987.
- [5] K.B. Nayak, "Ghumura" Folk Dance-A Glory of Kalahandi, in *Tribal Dances of India*, Edited by R.D. Tribhuwan, P.R. Tribhuwan, New Delhi, 1999.
- [6] Mahendra Kumar Mishra, *Oral Epics of Kalahandi* (Author) Publisher: NFSC; 1st edition .2014.
- [7] Kalahandi: Loka Anusthan, Edited by Jayanta Kumar Behera, Dr Dolagobinda Bisi, Parameswar Mund, Mahabir Sanskrutika Anusthan, 1998
- [8] Loka Nutrya Ghumura, Edited by Parameswar Mund, Mahabir Sanskrutika Anusthan, June 2002.
- [9] The Heroic Dance Ghumura, Edited by Sanjay Kumar, Mahabir Sanskrutika, 2002.
- [10] The Heroic Dance Ghumura, Edited by Sanjay Kumar, Mahabir Sanskrutika, 2002.