

AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF MODERNITY ON SAMBALPURI MUSIC AND DANCE

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Abstract: Sambalpur – a district in western Odisha of India, is a region that has a distinct cultural identity in all over world. Sambalpur is famous for its Handloom textile, popularly known as Sambalpuri textile, rich heritage of dance, music, unique ritual of *Nuakhai*, *Sital Sasthi*, *Pujuntia*, *Bhai Juntia* and Sambalpuri language. This distinct cultural identity of Sambalpur arises from the strong association of the tribal and folk communities which have been coexisting in Sambalpur for centuries. The unique cultural aspects of Sambalpur are undergoing massive change due to the different processes of change like Modernisation, Westernization, Digitalisation and Globalisation. Sambalpuri dance and music are undergoing changes in its rhythm, costumes, steps, instruments due to modernisation and globalisation. The objectives of the paper are to find out the changing elements of Sambalpuri culture particularly music and dance, the reason/causes of changes and impact of such change on the people and different aspects of culture itself. The study was carried out in Sambalpur district only. For this exploratory and descriptive study, methods like observation, key informant interview and case study were used. Modern steps and rhythms have entered Sambalpuri music and dance to make it more entertainment oriented and popular for stage performances. Changes are also seen in the use of musical instruments and costumes. Many of the traditional costumes are not found now a days. A few new costumes are now put on by the dancers which are easily available in the market at a low cost. The manufacturing materials of the instruments have also changed.

Keywords – Sambalpuri culture, music, dance, change, modern, steps, rhythm, costume, instrument

Introduction

Folk music and dance are important parts of the traditional culture of any society. The people in the community inherit and carry forward the excellent folk music and dance to the next generation, one generation after the other. The folk dances of western Odisha once originated for entertainment and ritualistic purposes at the local tribal dominated villages. The famous dance of western Odisha i.e., Sambalpuri dance originated in different parts of Sambalpur. Folk music and dance are like the two faces of a coin. The acoustic instruments used in folk music of western Odisha enjoy a special status for their rarity. Moreover, these instruments are the real stuff to create an indomitable presence of the sweet folk styles.

The dance and music of western Odisha, which once originated for different ritualistic and entertainment purposes centuries ago, has now become famous due to the mass media and digitalization. Sambalpuri dance and music has now become an integral part of any kind of function and celebration, at all levels including family, community, state, national and international level.

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There have been drastic changes in the traditional folk culture of western Odisha in general and the folk music and dance in particular. With the development of transport and communication, technology, and the internet there have been drastic changes in the content and rhythm of folk music, style or presentation, and costume of all kinds of folk dance. In view of the integration of traditional folk music and dance with modern elements, many opportunities and challenges are coming forward. Changes are seen in the rhythm, costume, steps of dance. Similarly, music and musical instruments are also undergoing changes. Xiang (2020) writes that with the development of the spread of folk-dance culture, more and more dissonant voices will appear; that they will question the connotation of culture from time to time, and the abuse of cultural communication will be carried, which makes the communication circle of folk-dance culture full of hostility, making some people afraid of cultural communication, a tragedy for the inheritance and protection of folk culture.

Change is inevitable. Hence, everything in this world is changing in course of time. Same is the case with Sambalpuri folk music and dance. Sambalpuri music and dance are adopting elements of modern music and dance and vice-versa. Sambalpuri music and dance are undergoing changes in its rhythm, costumes, steps, instruments due to modernisation, globalisation, and technological revolution.

Folk dance is one of the most important elements of art and culture of mankind. The art of folk dance is evolved from the natural instinct of human being's self-expression (Nayak, 2023). In many primitive tribal communities of the world dance is regarded as an inevitable part of life. Therefore, like eating, drinking, working dancing is considered as a natural instinct of tribal life (Mishra: 1996: 314). The origin of folk dance is inherent in the activities like food collection, cultivation, sexual desire, and religious consciousness of primitive mankind. Accordingly, the folk dances and songs are manifestation of the development of fundamental instinct of our ancestors. Thus, the evolution and development of folk dances and songs are thought of as incidental consequences (Mohapatra, 1964). Vidyarthi and Rai (1979) write that folk song, music and dance of tribal are a composite whole which is one of the dominant characteristics of their culture.

Odisha as a whole and mostly western Odisha is famous for its folk dances. There are many folk dances in Odisha such as Ghumura Dance, Changu Dance, Baagh Naach or Tiger Dance, Gotipua Dance, Nachni Dance, Odissi Dance, Ruk Mar Nacha (Chhau Dance), Dhap Dance, Karma Naach, Dasakathia Dance, Jhoomar Dance, Chadya Dandanata Dance, Ghanta Patua Dance, Ghumara Sanchar Dance, Kandhei Dance, Kela keluni Dance, Sakhi Nata Dance etc. which have been entertaining the teeming masses since old age (Mohapatra, 2015). The famous folk dances of western Odisha are Ghumura in Kalahandi, Dalkhai in Sambalpur, Dhap in Kalahandi, Bajasal in Kalahandi, Nachnia in Bolangir, Badi in Nuapada and Kalahandi, Danda in Bolangir (Behera, 2016). The famous folk songs and

dances of western part of the State are *Dalkhai*, *Rasarkali*, *Mailajada*, *Nachnia*, *Bajnia*. Some other forms of dance are *Gourbadi*, *Kasisabadi*, *Dandari*, *Parbha*, *Bandibutol*, *Sanchar*, *Samprada*, *Krushnaguru*, *Ghumra*, *Maadili*, *Ghubukudu*, *Dhap*, *Karama*, *Dakaa*, *Sabdanrutya* etc. The tunes of the folk music *Sajani*, *Galara*, *Halia*, *Chhuadula* are very soothing to the listeners (Nath and Mishra, 2023).

Vidyarthi and Rai (1979) have classified tribal folk dance in terms of formation into three forms such as group dance, couple dance and single dance.

A small but unique land in Western Odisha is Sambalpur which abounds with lush green forests, colourful wildlife, captivating waterfalls, rich tribal culture, folk songs and dances. The region is well known for *dalkhai*, the most popular form of folk dance of the Adivasis (Naik, 2020). Pasayat (2003) in his two books on “Tribal and Folk Culture” and “Tribe, Caste and Folk Culture” writes in detail about dances like *Karma*, *Sambalpuri*, *Madli*, *Bajasalia*, *Goubadi*, *Dandari*, *Dhap*, *Ghumura*, and *Chhaki*. *Dalkhai* is the most popular socio-religious traditional dance of western Odisha is performed by the tribes like Mirdhas, Kuda, Kondhs, Gonds, Binjhals etc. (Padhan, 2018). *Dalkhai* is a typical dance of western Odisha based on a ritual. At first *dalkhai* dance was a customary dance among the Western Odisha. Gradually it gathered popularity among the Hindu society (Nepak, 1993). The dance is accompanied with music and performed during the puja of *dalkhai devi*. A typical instrument called “*dhunkel*” is played on this occasion. After the ritual is over, the young girls sing song with *dalkhai* dance. (Dash, 2019). The five famous and popular musical instruments are *Dhol*, *Nissan*, *Tasa*, *Timkidi*, *Muhuri* and *Jhanj*. The three famous music of western Odisha are *Ganda Baja*, *Dulduli Baja* and *Bajnia Baja* (Nath and Mishra, 2023).

Significance of the Study

Sambalpuri dance and music are undergoing changes in its rhythm, costumes, steps, instruments. These changes are taking place due to numerous reasons. The reasons for changes can be categorized into two types: intentional and unintentional. Some of the changes are taking place due to the impact of modernization, globalization, digitalization. The rhythms of music and forms of dance are being modified by the new generation choreographers to make it more stage oriented and popular. By such attempts the Sambalpuri dance and music will lose its originality. Sambalpuri music and dance have their uniqueness which should not vanish due to the fusion of modernity. Therefore, it is very important to document the traditional aspects of Sambalpuri music and dance. The present study is very important as it will find out the different reasons for change and the different aspects of change in Sambalpuri music and dance.

Objectives and Methodology

The objectives of the paper are to find out the changing elements of Sambalpuri music and dance like change in rhythm, step, costume, musical instruments; the reason/causes of changes; and impact of such change on the people and different aspects of culture itself.

The present study on the impact of modernity on Sambalpuri music and dance is a purely qualitative study. It followed the exploratory and descriptive approach. The study is based on both primary and secondary data. Secondary data were collected from different books, journals, and websites. The study was carried out in Sambalpur district only. Primary data was collected from musicians and dancers selected through snowball sampling method from the samples of Sambalpur district. Methods like personal interview, and focused group methods (FGDs) were adopted for collection of primary data from the musicians and dancers. Semi structured open ended interview schedules were used for collection of primary data. Key informant interview was done with 20 persons which includes musicians (10) and dancers (10). In depth interviews were done to collect qualitative data from the musicians and dancers. FGDs were also conducted among the musicians and dancers. The samples were asked different questions to know their views on the different dimensions of changes in Sambalpuri music and dance and the reasons and impact thereof. The collected data were analyzed using the method of content analysis.

Change in Sambalpuri Music

The traditional forms of the Sambalpuri music and dance forms have also faced several changes to make it more comfortable, attractive, and more influential irrespective of the pull factors already existing inside the locality and community. Sambalpuri music and dance are undergoing changes in its rhythm, costumes, steps, instruments due to modernization and globalization. Sambalpuri music and dance adopt elements of modern music and dance and vice-versa.

Changes in Rhythm

The rhythm of Sambalpuri music is also undergoing changes due to the impact of modernity and development of technology. As discussed earlier, there are specialized *gurus* to teach music. Local musicians do not take any form of formal training to learn the varieties of Sambalpuri music. They learn on their own by imitation, by listening to and observing the music being played by experienced musicians. Now a days, to make the music more attractive and melodious, the musicians themselves are changing the rhythm while making stage performances.

Guru Sankar Prasad Pradhan says that “The dalkhai is of dadra pattern. Rasarkeli, Maelajada and Bajnia are of dadra pattern. The song in Dalkhai is of three *matra*. But now a days it is done in six *matra*. It is justified and appropriate

to use three *matra*. But now a days in stage performances six *matra* is used”.

Famous Sambalpuri dancer Supreeti Mishra says that “Rangabati song is a very famous Sambalpuri song. The male lover addresses his beloved as “Rangabati”. But the song was modernised, and a remix is made where the single word Rangabati was divided and used in the modern song as two word “ranga” and “bati”...which totally changed the meaning of the song and gave a vulgar meaning to it. This is not at all acceptable”.

Changes in the Music and Musical Instruments

Changes are also seen in the types of musical instruments and the number of musical instruments used. There have been drastic changes in the materials used for making the instruments. Earlier they were made using clay, iron, leather, and ropes made from different creepers. But now-a-days, due to numerous reasons, the musicians are not making the musical instruments on their own. They are not using the instruments used by indigenous people. The indigenous people too have given up of making traditional instruments due to the difficult process of making the instruments, non-availability of natural products, less durability of the instruments, requirement of more servicing and moreover due to declining demand of handmade instruments. In turn they are using the instruments readily available in the market made up of the combination of plastic and tin.

One of the key informants reported:

“In the past musicians used *Tasa* and *Timkidi* made up of clay and leather. But now a days everybody is using *Tasa* and *Timkidi* made of tin and plastic that are sold in the market. There are certain compulsions in this case. For example, now the troupes are going to different places for performances. The instruments made up of clay are not transportable easily. Those are less durable. Those may break while taking that from one place to another while travelling via two-wheeler, bus or train. Further the leather becomes loose in clay *Tasa* after using it for some time. It needs to be baked before beating. It is a problem in the case of stage performances or other programmes. Now musicians are using *Tasa* made of tin and fiber. Even beating the *Tasa* which was traditionally done with bamboo sticks is done using plastic stick now.

Another key informant said:

“*Timkidi* is no longer used in stage performances. *Mahuri* is also not used anymore. Nobody now-a-days is interested in learning to play the *Mahuri*. Now harmonium and organs like electronic keyboards are used in place of *Timkidi* and *Mahuri*. In villages *Timkidi* is also not used anymore. Those are also not made by people in rural areas.

Day will come when these instruments can be seen as specimens, as traditional musical instruments in museums like that of some traditional ornaments”.

Change in Sambalpuri Dance

Sambalpuri dance is also undergoing changes day by day due to the impact of modernization and globalization. There have been many changes in the steps and context of dance. These changes have been noticed over a period. However, many of these changes cannot be noticed by a common man who occasionally or incidentally watches Sambalpuri dance for entertainment and relaxation or during stage performances. The professional *gurus*, and experienced dancers can notice the changes in different aspects of Sambalpuri dance like costume or music.

Changes in Costume

Sambalpuri dancers normally put on handloom Sambalpuri saree with the typical Sambalpuri *Saptapar* (the age-old symbol of Sambalpuri handloom). Mostly the sarees are a combination of three colours; red, black, and white. But now a days, the dancers while doing stage performances wear any kind of Sambalpuri saree. Sometimes it is seen that they are wearing plain Sambalpuri saree of any colour with a border only. It is also observed that they are wearing cotton sarees with Sambalpuri prints. One of the reasons, as mentioned by the respondents, is the high price of typical Sambalpuri handloom sarees. Everyone can not afford to buy a typical Sambalpuri handloom saree for dance purposes only. The *chitralayas* are also supplying those types of plain Sambalpuri saree and printed Sambalpuri sarees at low cost.

One of the respondents said that.

“Earlier saree was worn up to the ankle. But now a days saree is worn up to knee for better performance in the stage. Means to dance freely and speedily.”

Another respondent said that.

“*Dhalia khusa* was done earlier by women dancers. But now women are doing normal *khusa*. And decorating the *khusa* with lots of sunflower and rose made up of plastic around the *khusa* (hair knot).”

Another respondent said.

“We are using normal bangles which are commonly used by women. But we have heard that earlier *kal chudi* were put on by dancers”.

The dancers put on different kinds of ornaments on different parts of the body like hair knot, ear, nose, neck, arm, hand, waist, finger, ankle, toes etc. during performances. But drastic changes have been made in the ornaments used by the dancers nowadays. They are not putting on all the traditional ornaments. They are

using some traditional ornaments and some modern ornaments. Nowadays different kinds of imitation ornaments for dancers are readily available in the market at a very low price. Some of the respondents who are dancers have not even seen a few ornaments which are mentioned in the section costume of this report.

One of the respondents said that.

“Even I have not seen many ornaments. I have only heard the name of many ornaments and seen pictures of some. Many of these traditional ornaments are not available even with senior dancers. Many are not even available in the *chitralayas* also. Now very a smaller number of ornaments are used while stage performances.”

Another respondent described that.

“Nowadays in head - *pan patri, chepna, chaunri mudi*; in neck - *khagla, paisa mali, pohla mali*; in ear - *karna phul, sikla*; in nose - *chakari guna*; in arm - *taad, baha suta*; in wrist - *katria, bandria, kal chudi*; in waist - *gunchi*; in ankle - *paenri* is used. Previously *gunchi* was used to tie the saree in the waist as the women were not using under wear. And hence it was put as waist belt to tie the saree. But now it is put on over the saree. Now dancers use *ghoongro* instead of *paenri*. In coastal Odisha, they are using *benga patia* instead of *gunchi* in waist. In earlier times, the dancers were also using natural flowers such as *kurei phool* and feathers on the hair knot in the head. But now they are using plastic flowers and feathers instead of the natural ones.”

One of the respondents said.

“Where will we get flowers like *kurei phool*? We are also going to different places for stage performances. Due to the non-availability of natural flower and feather we are using plastic flower and feather. Many of us do not know which flower is *kurei phool*? We have not seen *kurei phool* yet in our life.”

Changes in Steps of Dance

With the passage of time changes in the steps of dance have also been noticed. The traditional steps of Sambalpuri dance are simple, repetitive, and monotonous. Now the choreographers are adding new steps in the dance to make the dances more attractive in stage performances. Facial expressions and gesture are not an important aspect of folk dance. Facial expression and gesture were given less importance in earlier times. In classical dance facial expression is given much more importance. But nowadays facial expressions and gestures have been included in Sambalpuri folk dance to make it more striking. In the past the rhythm of dance changed in four steps. In earlier days, the dancers were hardly using four to five steps in the entire composition of the dance. But it proved monotonous for the spectators. So, at

present the choreographers are changing the composition and putting two to three steps in each rhythm to make it more eye-catching and entertaining. However, such changes in composition of steps etc. can be identified only by experienced and senior dancers.

Change in the Context of Dance: A Case Study of “Dalkhai” Dance in Transition

Traditionally, *dalkhai* is supposed to be an Adivasi dance. It was also a ritual dance performed during *Bhai juntia* fasting for worshipping deity *Dalkhai*. Due to tribal migration and processes of cultural transformation, it has spread to the urban centres of western Odisha and is performed today also in the guise of the urban Sambalpuri folk dance. As the Sambalpuri dance, it has become the most characteristic and popular dance style of the region and the core of various folk dances of western Odisha. Now it is also performed during *nuakhai*, *pus puni*, *fagun puni* and during marriage ceremonies. It is also performed in various festive occasions and cultural functions nowadays. Through public performances, the *dalkhai* dance has become one of the most important identity markers of Sambalpuri identity, synonymous with the regional identity of western Odisha with its core center Sambalpur town Guzy, 2013.

The *dalkhai* song which is sung during the worship of the deity in front of “*dalkhai kuthi*” is as follows.

Dalkhai re-----Dalkhai re----

Ghadi mari ude dasara janha

(The autumn moon comes up with tune of time)

Kuanri tukel manankar mana uchhana

(The unmarried girls are so excited)

Sulakuthi kede sundara dise

(The deck of the goddess (altar of sixteen) is so beautiful)

Fule fule saja heichhe sate

(Decorated with lot of flowers)

Sahe aatha duba, chaula dhari

(With hundred and eight sacred grass and unboiled rice)

Dalkhai Devi ke bandei kari

(Welcome and adore the deity)

Kuanri tukel mane dhana re

(The unmarried girls invoke)

Sate ken ---

(Truly....)

Upasa kari, maa ke sumari dada bhai lagi kaen

(Pray the deity remaining fast for the well-being of their brothers)

Dalkhai re ---

In its ritual form, the *dalkhai* dance is today only performed in some very remote villages of the Bora Sambar region. As a common village dance tradition of the region, *dalkhai* is about to vanish because most mothers do not want their girl children to dance in front of men and boys. Often, the villagers themselves have decided to abandon the *dalkhai* tradition due to its supposed sensual character (*ibid*). Nath and Mishra (2023) write that “In recent time industrialization and urbanization has deeply influenced folk culture. They are rapidly losing their uniqueness. *Dalkhai* is no exception to it. *Dalkhai* has undergone a sea change and has moved from the tribal areas to the urban centers of culture. It is no more only a ritual dance which is performed for *Dalkhai* Goddess. Now various cultural troupes are performing the dance at national and international levels on different occasions. This has vandalized the sacred ritual dance and turn it into a means of entertainment. The simplicity and purity with which *Dalkhai* was originally performed is no more visible”. Naik (2020) also writes that the folk dance *dalkhai* is getting modernized day by day. With the passage of time, *dalkhai* dance form has stepped out from its traditional anchor and has assimilated in it the taste and aptitude of the modern viewers.

Folk researcher Dr. Shyam Sundar Dhara says that “Depending on the taste of the people and love for modernity, if we do a lot of change in steps and rhythm is not good. The folk dance will lose its importance and originality. The basics of the rhythm of the dance should not be destroyed. The traditions should not be omitted in love for modern rhythm. Modernity has intruded. The choreographers are changing the steps as per taste of people and modernity. The dancers are not wearing traditional costumes. They are using costumes as per availability and popularity. If this happens one day the Sambalpuri folk dance would vanish, and deteriorating form of dance would remain for future generations”.

Inclination of Youths for Modern Dances

Modern generation youths are more inclined towards modern disco dance. They are feeling reluctant to perform folk dance on different occasions except in traditional rituals. This is why many of these forms are losing popularity, vanishing altogether in some cases. Now such folk dances are used mostly as stage performances during different functions at different institutes and organizations, celebration of *Nuakhai* or in social functions like marriage and thread ceremony.

Factors of Change in Sambalpuri Dance and Music

The Sambalpuri dance and music are undergoing numerous changes due to various internal and external factors. The external factors are the different processes of social change like westernization and modernization. The steps in dances have

changed as new and western steps are included to make it more attractive and entertainment oriented during stage performances. The internal factors regarding changes in costumes are the non-availability of natural raw materials like flowers and feathers due to deforestation. The artificial costumes are more attractive, cheaper, and durable. The musicians have started using the instruments readily available in the market these are made up of the combination of plastic and tin, which are cheap and transportable too. The other reasons of using instruments made up of tin and plastic are non-availability of natural products, less durability of the instruments, requirement of more servicing. Facial expression is not a feature of folk dance. It is a feature of classical dance. But that is also included in folk dance now a days. Moreover, the availability of smart phone and internet has accelerated the changes in all elements of Sambalpuri music and dance such as rhythm, step, costume and instruments.

Diffusion of Sambalpuri Music and Dance

Previously folk dances were performed either to propitiate the gods, to pacify the invisible soul, to fight against the evil or to relax after the hard work throughout the day. These dances were also performed during marriages, festivals, fairs, and during the time of harvesting the crops. Now in many places and occasions, all kinds of Sambalpuri dances are organized as stage performances, as cultural programme for entertainment and merry making. Sambalpuri music and dance has diffused from Sambalpur to different parts within and outside Odisha and India. Sambalpuri dances are performed in different functions by different educational institutions and other organizations outside Sambalpur district. Sambalpuri music troupes are also invited on auspicious occasions like thread and marriage ceremony in different parts of Odisha. People give preference to dance to the tune of Sambalpuri music rather than to modern music in the procession of thread ceremony and *barat* in marriage processions. Moreover, it has reached to different nook and corner of the World. Odia societies outside Odisha and India are observing different Odia festivals and rituals even if they are staying outside Odisha and India. Sambalpuri dance is a must attraction in all functions of Odia societies/communities existing outside Odia and India.

Cultural integration and assimilation have also taken place with the onset of the process of modernization and globalization along with technological revolution. Sambalpuri music, song and dances mixed with modern music and dance to make them more attractive and popular. The rhythm of Sambalpuri dance is undergoing change to make it more melodious. Modern steps of dance are also added in the dance along with the traditional steps to make the dance more attractive and popular in the stage performances. The choreographers are innovating new steps which are not original/traditional Sambalpuri steps. This can also be termed as additive acculturation wherein, instead of replacing the ancestral culture, Sambalpuri

culture has expanded its existing cultural repertoire. This is a bright example of universalization. Hence, cultural diffusion and integration has taken place with the onset of the process of globalization and modernization.

Conclusion

Cultural diffusion and change are unavoidable. The Sambalpuri culture has diffused not only from Sambalpur to different parts within and outside Odisha but also reached to different nook and corner of the World. The cultural diffusion of Sambalpuri music and dance in the 21st century is much faster compared to the previous century due to the revolution in technology. More specifically due to unlimited internet facilities and use of smart phone by people irrespective of age, sex, and space. But the original elements of Sambalpuri dance and music should not be diluted in the name of modernization. Certain benchmarks should be fixed in both Sambalpuri dance and music which would be the basics and unique features of Sambalpuri dance and music irrespective of time and space. Xiang (2020) opines to actively use the wide coverage of the network, information release quickly and timely update folk dance performance information, including destination, time, and other related information. In a word, using the advantage of rapid transmission of information on the Internet to realize the dynamic collection of folk-dance information to meet the needs of the public to experience and watch, the relevant dance cultural communication activities will also be more effective.

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