

Article

Formation of Values through Chhau Nach in Purulia District

Sandip Mahato¹, Arif Ansari², Laxmiram Gope³, Shaktipada Mahato⁴

¹Research Scholar, Department of Education, Sidho-Kanho-Birsha University, Purulia, West Bengal.

²Student, Department of English, 4th Semester Student, Sidho-Kanho-Birsha University, Purulia, West Bengal.

³Assistant Professor, Department of Education, Sidho-Kanho-Birsha University, Purulia, West Bengal.

⁴Student, Department of Educational, S.T.T. Collage, Purulia, West Bengal.

I N F O

Corresponding author:

Laxmiram Gope, Department of Education,
Sidho-Kanho-Birsha University, Purulia, West
Bengal.

E-mail Id:

laxmiram.1122@gmail.com

How to cite this article:

Mahato S, Ansari A, Gope L et al. Formation of
Values through Chhau Nach in Purulia District.
J Adv Res Jnl Mass Comm 2020; 7(3): 11-15.

Date of Submission: 2021-01-04

Date of Acceptance: 2021-03-17

A B S T R A C T

“Keep your habits positive because your habits become your values.
Keep your values positive because your values become your destiny.”

Mahatma Gandhi

Value formation is the confluence of people's personal experiences and particular culture they are entwined in. Values are imposed from their family in childhood and reinforced through culture and life experiences. Culture plays an important role in forming people's values. Culture gives them a community and shared reality so that they can cooperate in activities and customs that give meaning. The main objective of this study is to seek the importance of Chhau Nach for the formation of values. Chhau Nach is enjoyed by every Purulian. People's moral, personal, social, democratic values are shaped by Chhau Nach. This study is descriptive cum survey type. The researchers themselves interviewed the Chhau artists. They extracted their views by asking various questions. The researchers have also taken the help of secondary data. Internet was the only source for the collection of secondary data. The researchers took the help of essays and articles from the internet in writing this paper. Through this study they learn that Chhau Nach plays a significant role in forming the values of the Purulians. Chhau Nach shapes their personal values by showing various episodes from *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata* and Puranas. A Chhau Nach artist takes ideas from the culture of Purulia and eventually shapes the cultural values of the Purulians. The artists in a different style portray the characters like Ganesha, Durga, Shiva etc. Thus, through the portrayal of such characters the Chhau artists form the moral values of the Purulians. Chhau Nach shapes people's social values and teaches them to live in peace and harmony.

Keywords: Culture, Chhau, Nach, Value, Formation

Introduction

Purulia district is one of the twenty third districts of West Bengal in eastern India. The city of Purulia is the administrative headquarters of the district. The territory

of present Purulia district was a part of Banga, one of the 16 Mahajanapadas according to Jaina Bhagabati Sutra and was also a part of the country known as Vajra – Bhumi in ancient period. During the medieval period, the territory is

regarded as a part of Jharkhand region. Little is known about Purulia before the British East India company acquired this territory by obtaining the grant of Diwani of the Subhas of Bengal, Bihar, Orissa in 1765.

By Regulation XVIII of 1805, a Jungle Mahals district composed of 23 parganas and mahals including the present Purulia was formed. By Regulation XIII of 1833 the Jungle Mahals district was broken up and a new district called Manbhum was constituted with headquarters at Manbazar. In 1838 the district headquarters was transferred from Manbazar to Purulia. Finally, in 1956 Manbhum district was partitioned between Bihar and west Bengal under the state Reorganization Act and the Bihar and West Bengal (Transfer of Territories) ACT 1956 and the present Purulia district was born 1 November 1956.¹

Purulia is and always had been famous for its cultural heritages. It is a district of rich culture and heritage. Chhau Nach is one of them. UNESCO called Chhau Nach an intangible heritage of humanity in the year 2010. It is worth preserving because there is relationship between Chhau Nach and the values of the Purulians. Chhau Nach shapes the values of the Purulians through its performance.

About Chhau Nach

Chhau Nach is one of the most renowned tribal martial dances of India. The dance is known as Purulia Chhau in West Bengal, Seraikella Chhau in Jharkhand, Mayurbhanj Chhau in Orissa. Since the dance is supposed to have originated in the Purulia district of Bengal, it is known as such in the state. Purulia Chhau differs quite a lot from its counterparts from other states of India and has distinctive characters of its own. It is internationally renowned for its beauty and perfection.

Purulia Chhau is performed on the Sun festival, which falls in the Chaitra month of Hindu calendar (Bengali month) i.e. March-April as per the Gregorian calendar. However, it is not limited to the festival; the dance can be performed on other occasions in the state as well. For instance, on Republic day of 1995, Chhau Nach was approved as a theme of West Bengal's tableau to walk on the Raj path of Delhi.²

In the countryside performances of Purulia Chhau, there is no levitated stage and the dancer performs on the flat ground and so many audiences who are encircling the dancer. While performing in some show or on a wider platform, an elevated stage is used for the performance. The dance is accompanied with loud beats and trumps and instruments like drum and Casio. It starts with a drum beat with loud sound, followed by an invocation to Lord Ganesh, the Hindu God of wisdom and business. The dancer is supposed to wear heavy colourful head masks and perform the steps with vigour.

The dance ranges from celebrating martial arts, acrobats

and athletics performed in festive themes of a folk dance, to a structured dance with religious themes found in Shaivism, Shaktism and Vaishnavism. The stories enacted by Chhau dancers included from the Hindu epics the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, the Puranas and other Indian literature.

The dance is traditionally created and performed by males, regionally celebrated during spring in every year and may be a syncretism dance form that emerged from a fusion of classical Hindu dances and the traditions of ancient regional tribes. The dance is egalitarian and brings together people from diverse socio-economic backgrounds in a festive and religious spirit.³



Figure 1. Chhau Nach in performance

Musical Instrument used in Chhau Nach

The dance is usually performed at night in an open space to traditional and folk melodies, played on the reed pipes, mohuri and shehnai. The reverberating drumbeats of a variety of drums, Dhol, Nagada and Charchari, dominate the accompanying music ensemble. Chhau is an integral part of the culture of these communities. It binds together people from different social strata and ethnic background with diverse social practices, beliefs, professions and languages.



Figure 2. Musical instruments

Need and Significance of the Study

Chhau Nach is called an Intangible heritage of Humanity by UNESCO in the year 2010. Chhau Nach promotes peace, non-violence, co-operation, value-formation and prosperity in socio-cultural context. Chhau culture has practicability in many dimensions such as value-formation, cultural transformation, socialization and preservation. Now we live in LPG (liberalization, privatization, and globalization) era. In this challenging era, people have to concentrate on global

warming, water pollution, decline of forest, soil erosion and unplanned strategies like environment, society and economic perspective. Apart from these things people must concentrate on their cultures. Otherwise one day they will have nothing to call their own. They may suffer from identity crisis. Therefore, it is very much essential to preserve the old things. But at present people are not interested in such things. There are many threats that Cultural heritages are generally facing. One of them definitely is the effect westernization. People prefer the western style. They are giving less regard to their own ethnic culture. Another threat is the population that is growing day by day. The standards of living are decreasing. There are no resources. People's traditional spirits are destroyed. But people must know that in such a situation their own cultural practices can only give them solace. The themes of Chhau Nach are drawn from Hindu mythology, everyday life and aspect of nature, just a mood or emotion, social issues, religious folk tale. It is a type of dance which takes utmost care in expressing universal emotions. The dance primarily belongs to West Bengal since it is believed to have been originated from Purulia district but it's widely popular in other states like Odessa, Jharkhand etc. The Chhau Nach of Purulia is distinct as compared to its other counterparts in terms of the portrayal of characters and the uses of masks.⁴



Figure 2. Musical instruments

Objectives

Seeking the importance of Chhau Nach for the Formation of values.

- Personal values
- Cultural values
- Moral values
- Universal values
- Democratic values
- Social values

Methodology

By nature, this study is descriptive–cum survey type. The researchers have taken the help of both primary as well as

secondary data. The Researchers had gone to the villages to meet the Chhau artists. Conversation and interaction took place for filling up the questionnaire. Many other questions were asked to extract their point of view. For secondary data, the researchers have taken the help of internet. The observations of the researchers helped a lot writing this paper because they themselves are a part of that culture.⁵

Tools used for Data Collection

Various types of tools and techniques were for the collection of the dates.

- Questionnaire.
- Interview & interaction with the artists.
- During the data collection researchers used video recorder, voice recorder and so on
- The Researchers used observational methods because they themselves are a part of Chhau culture

Findings

Personal Values

Chhau Nach has positive impact on the formation of people's personal values. Chhau Nach influences people's love, knowledge and creativity. Chhau artists presents many episodes where love is celebrated. They try to show the importance and value of love. Chhau Nach enhances people's knowledge through their presentation. The famous Indian epics, Purans and Vedas are the storehouses of knowledge. The artist through their presentation distributes the divine to their audiences. Chhau Nach also develops creative thinking and good habits.⁶

Cultural Values

According to the people of Purulia, Chhau Nach has positive impact on value formation in common masses. Culture is nothing but a way of life. Chhau Nach helped to sustain the cultural values of the Purulians. There are people of different culture and religion in Purulia, but comparatively the number of Hindus is more. Whatever may be the religion, Chhau Nach is enjoyed by everyone. Thus, Chhau Nach shapes the values of all the Purulians. The beliefs of the Hindus are based on *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, *Vedas* and *Purans*. Chhau Nach artists basically depict the characters of gods and goddesses from *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. In this way the ancient cultures and rules are presented on the stage through the form of dance. This helps to shape the values of the present generation. People start to imitate the ideals of the characters depicted on the stage. It is through the process of imitation that their cultural values are gradually shaped. Apart from gods and goddesses, the dancers portray various realistic characters. Through the portrayal of all such characters the artists gives social message. All these ideals and messages help to shape the values of the Purulians.⁷

Moral Values

Chhau Nach plays an important role in forming people's moral values. It is through Chhau Nach that people learn many things and enrich themselves. Chhau Nach deals with many things, from myth to real life issues. The events and the stories of Chhau Nach influences people gradually. It is through this gradual process that shapes their moral values. The emotional tone of the stories appeals them. The real-life issues make them aware about the things they were unaware before. Many events of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* are portrayed on the stage. This helps to shape the moral value of the people. There are virtuous and vicious characters in both the epics. The Chhau artists try to show the victory of virtue over vice through the portrayal of the characters and events. A harmonious message is sent to the society by the Chhau artists. The audience simply falls in love with the good characters and starts imitating them. It is through the process of imitation that the moral values of the people of Purulia are shaped. This is the reason that Chhau Nach is of great importance in Purulia. Their moral values are not only shaped by education, but also by their own culture.⁸

Universal Values

Most of the Purulians opine that Chhau Nach has positive impact on the formation of their values. Chhau Nach promotes universal value among the people of Purulia. Chhau Nach helps to establish peace in their society. It explores how human civilization gradually developed and changed. Chhau Nach depicts different episodes which are related to women's freedom. In many episodes, women are shown superior even to men, e.g. the episode of Maa Durga and Mahishasura. In this way value are formed which are related to women-empowerment. It also helps to realize the values of the old things which are gradually missing from the society. Chhau Nach has positive impact on the formation of good habits and behaviours. Chhau Nach also promotes health-oriented issues in common masses. It makes people conscious about their health. Many episodes in Chhau Nach enlighten people. It teaches to do something with collaboration and promotes togetherness. It has positive impact on community centric value formation. It helps to gain a kind of awareness about what is right and what is wrong. Last but not the least, Chhau Nach deals with human emotion which has universal appeals.⁹

Democratic Values

The first and the most important thing about Chhau Nach is that it is a team work. Without the cooperation of one another the dance will not be effective at all. The dancers and singers work in harmony to make it effective. So, the Chhau artists, through their collaborative work, teach people the most valuable thing. The artists believe

in democratic approach and teach the audience to be democratic towards everything. Through their dances also they spread the message of equality and freedom. Chhau Nach has great importance in establishing democratic values in the Purulians. Besides, through their stories and performances they promote liberty, equality and fraternity. There are many mythical characters who teach the lesson of equality.

Social Values

Most of the Purulians opine that the Chhau Nach has positive impact on the formation of social values. Chhau Nach helps to prevent the superstitious beliefs from the society. It promotes social values among the people and helps to form scientific mindset. Chhau Nach also has positive impact on the interpersonal value formation in common masses of Purulia District. People's culture is even shaped by Chhau Nach. Chhau Nach teaches people many things. It shapes people's nature and makes a person honest and a responsible citizen. It spreads the message of peace among the Purulians. Chhau Nach helps to develop scientific temperament among the masses in Purulia. It helps in forming the characters of the Purulians. Chhau artists fight against casteism and untouchability. The artists believe in secularism and spread the values of secularism. Chhau artists try their best to eradicate the bad habit by showing the stories of gods and demons.

Conclusion

UNESCO calls Chhau Nach an intangible heritage in the year 2010. This is something that must be preserved and the Purulians have been doing this for a very long time. It is practiced and enjoyed by the Purulians for centuries. The artists face many obstacles, they don't regard the obstacles at all. They do this because they love doing this. They are optimistic in spite of the struggles. Chhau Nach is and always has been important for the people of Purulia. It is because the values of the Purulians and Chhau Nach are interlinked, both influence each other. People's cultural, moral, democratic, universal and social values are shaped by Chhau Nach. This is the reason that many are coming forward with the intention of preserving Chhau Nach. There is a diploma course of Chhau Nach in Sidho-Kanho-Birsha University in Purulia. Some local institutions are established with the intention of promoting and preserving Chhau Nach. It has to be kept for the future generation as it promotes peace and harmony like any religion. Peace and harmony are the most important things that society needs the most.¹⁰

References

1. Basu B, Banerjee, Laboni. The Chhau Dance of Bengal. *International Journal on Textile Engineering and Processes* 2018.
2. Singh N, Lahane PD. A Study on Headgear and Costumes

- of Chhau Dance. *New Delhi: Asian Journal of Home Science* 2011.
3. Sinha S. Purulia Chhau- Introduction and Masks. epatshala. <http://epgp.inflibnet.ac.in>
 4. Bhattacharyay A. Mask Dances of Bengal. Sangeet Natak. 1968.
 5. Bhattacharya T. Paschimbanga Darshan Purulia. Firma KML Private Limited, Kolkata. 2014; 3.
 6. Mahato PP. The Anthropology of the Manbhum School of Chho: It's origin, development and creative excellence. In Folk Culture of West Bengal Institute of Art & Handicraft, Kolkata. 2002.
 7. Bhattacharyay A. Chhow Dance of Purulia. In District Census Handbook, Purulia. Govt. of West Bengal. 1961.
 8. Biswas KR. Masks from the Archives of the Indra Gandhi National Centre for Arts. *New Delhi: Indian Journal of Traditional Knowledge* 2007.
 9. Ghosh D. Banglar Mukhosh. Ananda Publishers Private Limited, Kolkata. 2012.
 10. Arden J. The Chhau Dancers of Purulia. *The Drama Review*, 1971; 15: 1-75.