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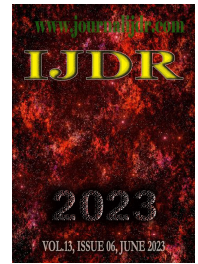
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RAJBANSHI FOLK DANCE: SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON 'HASTASANCHALANA'

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ABSTRACT

The Rajbanshis are greatest group of people in North East India, North Bengal (Previous Cooch Behar dynasty) Some part of Bangladesh, Nepal & Bihar. They have their own rich rituals and customs including song, traditional theatre and folk dances. Rajbanshis are practicing their dance movement in between life cycle of them. Several types of dances are practiced by them over the year. We can find the hand movements (Hastasanchalana) and steppings of these dances but it is not known whether they follow specific rules or not. We need to recognize different 'Hastasanchalana' using in the dance, try to collect and make the number or name of each 'Hastasanchalana'. This work will beneficial for coming generation and for new learner. We need to write and draw in specific way each and every hand movement in systematically. This initiative will guide properly to learn the folk dance of Rajbanshis.

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INTRODUCTION

Folk dance is an art form that is close to the everydaylife of a group of people. In the reference of Indian music, classical dances of India are derived from folk or religious sources. Folk dances can be either solo or group. Song & music is an essential part of dance. In some cases, the artists themselves sing, in some cases others sing and the artist are dancing. Dance is a physical expression. This expression can be seen in social, religious or entertainment. The Rajbanshis are the biggest indigenous group of people in North East India, North Bengal (Previous Cooch Behar dynasty), some part of Bangladesh, Nepal & Bihar. Since so many years they have been practicing their own rituals and customs including their song, traditional theatre, musical instruments and folk dances.

The introduction of Rajbanshi: The history of the origin of the Rajbanshi's it is said that they belong to the great Bodo family that entered India in the 10th century B. C., from the east and settled on the banks of the Brahmaputra and gradually spread over Assam and the whole of North Bengal.

"Hodgson reports" - in 1849 A.D. that Hajo founded the 'Koch kingdom'. The Koch belong to Tamulian + extraction and lived before the Aryans came. Hajo's grandson 'MaharajaVisva Sinha' became Hindu, renounced and adopted Rajbanshi. In Rangpur they

had two sects (a) Rajbanshi, (b) Koch. Rajbanshi is anindefinite term and some few of the individuals may possibly belong to other castes.

"Dr. Hunter" - observed that about the close of the fifteenth century one Koch king Hajo founded a kingdom at Kamrupa, His grandson Visva Sinha, together with his officers and all people of the condition apostatized to Hinduism. A divine ancestry for the Chief was manufactured by the Brahmins. The converts abandoned the name Koch and took that of Rajbanshi. Hunter also notes that in Rangpur, Jalpaiguri and Cooch-Behar, the name Rajbanshi, which literally means Royal Race.

"Rowney" - describes that intermarriage with Koch tribes with Hindus has considerably changed their old habits. Among the Rajbanshi's there is a distinction between those who have adopted the Vaishnav faith and the followers of 'Hindu God Siva'.

"Risley" - describes that Koch, Koch-Mandi, Rajbanshi, Palliya and Desi belong to a large Dravidian tribe of NorthEastern and Eastern Bengal amongst whom there are grounds for suspecting some admixture of Mongolian blood.

'They are thoroughly 'Koch' under the name 'Rajbanshi'. There is no historical foundation for the claim of Rajbanshi's to be a provincial variety of 'Kshatriyas'. The original nucleus of 'Rajbanshi' was certainly Dravidian'.

"Grierson" comments, there can be little doubt that the original 'Kochs' were the same as the 'Bodos'. The Koch, Mech and Bara or Bodo all connoted the same tribe or at most different sets of the same tribe. Rajbanshi's are the Hinduised Kochs of Rangpur and Goalpara'. "Gait" - describes the Rajbanshi's of North Bengal, as a synonym of Koch, this represents a real caste and, in this sense, only it may be entered in the schedule. Gait also describes Dhimals of Darjeeling and Nepal Terai as Rajbanshi. They often call themselves Rajbanshi. Their title is Maulik (Mallik). The Koch are cultivators and same as Rajbanshi'.

"Thompson" - states The Rajbanshis are the indigenous people of Northern Bengal and the third largest Hindu caste in the province. Many of the Rajbanshi have now taken sacred thread and were prepared to use force in support of their claim to be returned as Kshatriyas". Rajbanshis are claimed to be included as- Kshatriya, Bratya Kshatriya, Barua Kshatriya.

Chatterjee writes, "The masses of North Bengal areas are very largely of Bodo origin or mixed Austric-Dravidian-Mongo- lord. They can now mainly be described as Koch i.e., Hinduised or semi-Hinduised Bodo who have abandoned their original Tibeto- Burman speech and have adopted the northern dialect of Bengali'. They are proud to call themselves as Rajbanshi and to claim to be called Kshatriyas. Nothing much is definitely known about the Kochs of North Bengal prior to 16th century: they may be described as western Bodos, an extension of the great Bodo race of Assam and East Bengal which at one time peopled the entire Assam valley from Sadia right up to North Bengal. With the full Hinduization of the Koches, and the rise in power of their chiefs, Kshatriya origin was, as was natural, found out or suggested for them' 'Bisu or Bisa was the real founder of Koch power. He ruled from 1496-1115 A. D. 'Bisu' embraced Hinduism and took the name of Biswa-Sinha." "He himself was a worshipper of Siva and Durga, revived the Shakta Shrine at Kamashya. This is an old shrine of hoary antiquity and of Mongoloid or possibly even earlier Austric origin. It witnessed the final Brahmanization of a pre-Aryan cult. It is a symbol of the final Aryanization or Hinduization of the Indo-Mongoloids of North Eastern India. (Sanyal, C, Chandra)

According to the Legend Padmashri Dharmanarayan Barma, 'The father of the Kamtapuri language', the Austrian people entered the Kamrup-Kamta-Cooch Behar kingdom many centuries before the birth of Christ. These people gradually settled in the Brahmaputra River valley and the newcomers used to make a living by hunting, farming, and raising livestock in the region. However, this trend was later disrupted by the Mongolian population. The remaining populations assimilated with the Mongolian population. After the Austic Flood the Mangolians entered all of Northeast India. This Mongolian population is called Kirat. 'Aka', 'Dafla', 'Missing', 'Chingkou', 'Khamti Nga', 'Karbi', 'Boro', 'Mech', 'Aham' etc. belong to the Mangolian population. The 'Aryans' were the last of the newcomers to North-East India. It was during the Rikveda period that the Aryans entered North East India by crossing the Karatoyariver. References are found to the pre-Aryan kingdom of that period. Later Ghatak 'Kirat' dominated the region. According to historians, this Ghatak was the descendant of 'Ghatkasur', 'Sambarasura' and Ratnasur. The name of ancient pre-Jyotishpur is mentioned in 'Ramayana-Mahabharata', 'Kalikapurana', 'Vishnupurana', 'Agnipurana', 'Garudapurana', 'Matsyapurana', 'Bayupurana', 'Harivansha', 'Brihasamhita', 'Yoginitantra' etc. Ramayana describes that 'Amurtarajan' who was the son of 'Kush' founded the country of Pragjyotishpur. This 'Amurtarajan' is said to be the sage, Vishwamitra's grandfather. The name of Pragjyotishpur is mentioned in Ramayana (Barma and Manta, 2005)

Principal Ambikacharan Chowdhury writes on page 121 of Granth Khan, his book on the history and culture of the Rajbanshi nation, that with the fall of the Hindu king Kamtेशwar Nilambar (reign period – 1480-1498), Kamtapur Fort, a symbol of culture, civilization, valor, valor and tradition for a long time, was destroyed and the power The steps of Islamic power were initiated in the state. It is known that this

capture of Kamtapur by Hossain Shah of Gaur took place in 1493-1519 AD.

Bhuvanmohan Tarkaratna of Sridham Nabadwip scholars and Khagrabari resident Siddhanath Vedantabagish of Khagrabari scholars, Calcutta resident Durgacharan Shankha Vedantatirtha Mahashay etc. clearly mention that –Pundradesh Bhanga Kshatriya Rajbanshis are real Kshatriya children. In other words, pre-astrological (Kamrup) countries like Paundra, Videha etc. are located in the east of India. The city called Pundra is located in the south of the Himalayas. There is a reason why this country is called Pundra. Muni Kshatriya Raja gave the following blessings to Bali's five sons as follows —

That is, each of these five sons, Angabanga, Kalinga, Pundra and Suhma, will be named after one country and they will rule that country and become Yasaswis. Since then, the name of that country has been Pundra country. A class of Kshatriyas described by Manu as living in the Pundras and that the caste are royal Kshatriyas is proved from the Pundra signs. In other words, the six signs of Paundraks being engaged in sacrificial sacrifices, color in auspicious works, intelligence, devotion to God and agriculture are observed only in the Rajbanshi Kshatriya caste. Some signs of Kshatriyas of the Rajbanshi race in social activities strongly believe that the Rajbanshis are Paundrakshatriyas and their descendants have been called by different names as they gradually spread to the south-west and east.

About Folk Dance: Rhythm, Indigenous taal, body language, performance, all are very close to human life in folk dance. Nowadays the use of costume is seen in folk dance but in classical dance costume is done through a beautiful thought. Folk dance costumes depend on what is available in the local resources in that region. The folk dances of the region are traditionally created and changed based on the local resources available and the economic status of the people or community. Classical dances are mostly performed solo. In the case of folk dances, folk dances are usually done in groups. Especially men's folk dances are separate and women's folk dances are separate. Also we see folk dances by men and women together. Folk dances are performed in a group because people live together in groups in the same area for their protection. Staying together. Sharing the thoughts like happiness, sadness, laughter, tears, joy, enthusiasm and folk dances are born from there.

About Rajbanshi Folk Dance: Rajbanshi folk dance is one of the historical art forms. Rajbanshi people lives in the areas of lower Assam, Bangladesh, North Bengal, Bihar and some parts of Nepal in scattered way. According to various overview, the Rajbanshi people started their cultural journey about 500 years ago. Gradually dance occupied a special place along with music, musical instruments, folk drama. From birth to death lifestyle and their different needs also gave discover to folk dance. Rajbanshi folk dance has its roots in folk drama and everyday life. The genres of folk drama are basically three – one is folk dance derived from 'Kushan Gaan' (Folk theatre) or from Ramayana, second is 'Dotarapala' and third one is drama that permeate the contemporary chronicles and the stories of 'Bishahari Pala' or Padma Purana, Behula-Lakshindar and Chand Sadagar have a connection with the social image of the Rajbanshi society is revealed through these folk dramas and folk dances. There are two main aspects of Rajbanshi folk dance. Firstly – the needs of people to fulfil the demand, hunting, fishing and worship God for water issue. As example worshipping God 'Tistaburi' to get rid of flood relief and performing the 'Kati Puja' dance to procreate. Secondly in the folk drama, men dress up and act like women, an artistic attempt to express women's feelings is manifested in Rajbanshis through folk dance. Group folk dances are more common in Rajbanshi folk dances. Men's folk dances are like- Kamdev. Among the women's folk dances are Kati dance, Baran dance and Hudum dance. In almost all Rajbanshi women, the rhythm of the dance can be observed in the body. They do not need to learn this dance with formal education, they learn it by watching or instinctively or traditionally. The effect of folk dance being in the blood of Rajbanshi women can be seen. In

Rajbangshi dance, physical gestures include foot work, waist work, hand exercises, and expression of body flexibility, gracefulness, tenderness. Usually in the Rajbangshi younger women dances and the younger ones are called 'Kamala' or 'Komla' in the local language. Many people who perform this dance are considered as 'Kamala Sunderis'. This dance is performed to the rhythm of a song or to the melody of a flute or rhythm and melody of a dotara (String instrument) with the accompaniment of a 'Shanai' (Wind instrument).

Rajbangshi costume and ornaments: Although there is no specific dress for the dance, depending on the economic and social conditions of the region in which the Rajbangshi people live. Costume is naturally determined which is easily available and they perform the target dance wearing that dress. But now a days some young Rajbangshi dancer are used Fota, Bukuni, Patani and Semij, Aaloyaan. It is known that the ornaments used by the Rajbangshi women in the early days are now probably going to extinct. After interviewing the older Rajbangshi women's reveals that Rajbangshis used silver and gold ornaments even earlier. However not all ornaments were used at that time for dance at all levels. It is known from different interviews from old people of North Bengal that women of zamindar or women of families who were elite and have economically sounded they used these ornaments. Some of these indigenous ornaments are - Nose - 'Nolak', Ear - 'Kanpasha', Neck - 'Suryahar', 'KasaliMaduli', 'Sikihar', 'Chandrahari', 'Gazmati Har', Feet - 'Kharu', 'Tolakharu', 'FyalaKharu', 'Bagh Kharu', 'Hater Baleya', 'Komorer Got' and many other ornaments are known to have been used by the Rajbangshi women even about 100-150 years ago. Currently some ornaments are used in dance among the ornaments mentioned by following them. Percussion instruments are is one of the most important in the Rajbangshi instruments. Among them 'Desi Dhol', Akrajai, Khol, Domfo, Karka Nagara. His instruments include 'Dotara', 'Sarinda', 'Ektara', 'Bena', 'Yugi yantra' etc. In the flute, 'Nala banshi', 'Aar banshi', 'Mukhabanshi', Sanai are commonly used. One of the iron instruments used is 'Ghungur', 'Khapi', 'cymbal', 'Jury', 'Bell' etc.

Rajbangshi Dance practicing in their life cycle: Hudum Dance: In order to bring down the rain, the women of the house worship Hudum - Deo or Hudum Deva/Deity in the secluded desert away from the locality.

Tistaburi or Mecheni Dance: On the other hand, in some parts of Jalpaiguri, when the Teesta River water overflows, the crops are destroyed, it is also a form of suffering. It is expressed as a source of Goddess Teesta. Teesta Buri calms down and everyone smiles.

Sona Ray Dance: The dance of the god of Tiger. animals of the forest lived as they wandered, and people also lived |

Kamdev Dance: The Kamdev dance is performed by men to procreate, strengthen and keep the lineage alive. One family consisted of many people. Sometimes sons and daughters exceeded more than 10-15 people.

Baran Dance: From birth to death in the hall of society's festivals, dancing to the beat of the music and welcoming the guests, the new bride and bridegroom are welcomed as we know. Their participation in dance in other parts of society was very weak as it was spent on childbirth and child rearing.

Chhukri Dance: When the boys danced in women costumes, the artists were very demanding. The king or the landlords sometimes entertained them. They have been seen dancing to various songs such as Kishori Gaan Kate Nitya Chor Pari Gaan in their folk songs.

Jakoi Dance: During the rainy season, the river floods and the water from that river flows from village to village, every pond in the village is filled with water, ditches and cultivated land is flooded, roads, land, ponds and rivers all become one. In the time of flood the fish in the river go to the pond. After some days, the fish in the pond come out and float in the river but some fishes stayed in the pond whose sizes are small comparatively.

Bishahari Dance: Bisahari/Ma Manasa: This deity is the most venerated among the deities in the Rajbangshi family. Bisahari dance is performed during the marriage ceremony.

Kaati Dance: In day-to-day social life Koch Rajbangshi's practice many rituals and worship various deities. Katipuja is one of the oldest rituals of the Koch Rajbangshi's in Assam. Kati is a god made by clay. Praying Kati, they get lots of blessing and enjoyment.

Gowalini Dance: The Goalini Nritya (Dance) is basically related with agriculture and harvesting through which different stages of harvesting is narrated with the story of Lord Krishna by the women including one man who plays the dhak.



(Goyalini Dance practiced by the folk dancer of Rural Craft & Cultural Hub (UNESCO), Cooch Behar, at Bhawaiya Sangeet Academy O Parishad by Shibani Barman, Nirupama Barman, MinatiRava, Hachhna Hena, Asha Barman, Nilima Barman, Sunanda Barman, Rina Barman at Bhawaiya Sangeet academy O Parishad, WB. India by the artist 2022)

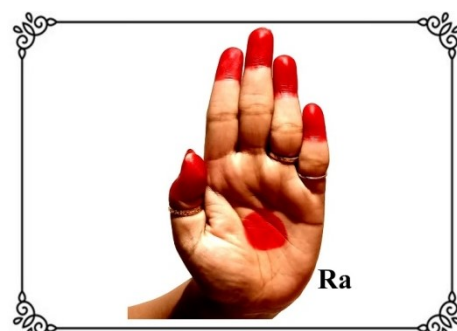
Dotara Pala Dance Drama: This Dance drama play with Dance, Acting and Music in the reference of present social context. Chhukri also dancing in the play. Sometime the Character Doyari is playing the role of comedy.

Kushan Dance: Kushan dance or kushan nritya or Kushan gaan is a Rajbangshi folk drama form based on Krittivasi Ramayan. The artistes narrate the story of Ramayan in Kamtapuri or Rajbangshi language through

Findings

"Hastasanchalana" (Hand posture) :Used in Rajbangshi Folk Dance: After observation, study and analysis of the interviews on Rajbangshi Folk Dances some movements are found from different sources and it became necessary to specify the name and numbering to learn it easily by using their indigenous language. This historical initiative (The name and numeric identification of the 'Hastasanchalana' of Rajbangshi indigenous Dance) has innovated by Eminent Artists and researcher Dr. Jayanta Kumar Barman and Riya Roy. Mentioned examples with the sketches are like -

1. Ra



Ra: It means stand still or stand for a while. The people of North Bengal have a large population of Rajbanshi in their social life. There are many storms in the life of a river. When the waves rise in a river, the mind wants to go across the river. Just like this, in the war between the people of North Bengal, which was going on from birth to death, this issue also came up again and again. Because danger was always ahead. This mudra of dance is particularly important to convey the folklore of folk life. This mudra is used to hold waste, to show 'go away' in the Rajbanshidance.

2.Churamani



Churamani: Churamani means the crown jewel of the head. The position of the mind on the crown of the head corresponds to the movement of the hands in the dance. On the head of a land revenue zamindar or a king, this 'Churamani' hand mudra is positioned here. In dance or folk-dance mudras, the hand movement or mudra, whatever it may be called, with the little ring finger, the middle finger, index finger folded into the palm of the hand and the thumb pointing upward, is apparently 'Churamani' Sama. Dancers use this mudra while holding some props their hand while dancing.

3.Moil



Moil: In the Rajbanshi language Moil means bud, like a mango bud in the very first stage, the buds are looking towards the sky. There is much hope then many fruits will blossom and the crops will blossom. Similarly, in the hand movements of Rajbanshi folk dances, such a mudra is found which bears a strong resemblance to the bud. We have compared this mudra to a mango bud by holding the four fingers together, the little ring finger, the middle index finger, and the big finger in the upper palm. Dancers use this mudra to show something to bring down or to keep anywhere in the dance.

4.Nishan



Nishan: Nishan is a native word, A piece of cloth used as a royal insignia and symbolically placed on a bamboo head in a clean holy place in Rajbanshi community. This sign of dedication to the deity is a symbol of tradition. In Rajbanshidance the mudra called 'Nishan' is creating a relationship with the Nishan that used in the Rajbangsi culture. Whatever the language of Hasta Mudra dance with the four fingers straightened, there is a spectacular feature of Nishan on the bamboo head. Similarly, Nishan of the Rajbangsi community and dance of the Rajbangsi community are both subjects of the same community. Dancers use this mudra to keep their hand in head, waste, to show her body while dancing.

5.Muthi



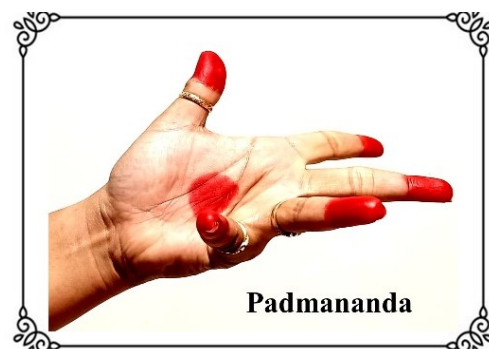
Ashurbad: Hastamudra is used in various welcoming dances from birth to death among the ritualistic rajabanshis, especially the younger ones to receive blessings with both hands. This act of handing over is done by this Hastamudra. This type of mudra used in the dance while showing blessings to others, showing ear rings we use this.

8. Sakhasakhi



Sakhasakhi: Sakha Sakhi is a special character who is like a friend, Sometimes the relationship lasts a lifetime. The friendship can be made between two male or male-female friend. The image clearly shows that the fingers of each dynasty community people are colorful people and are hugging each other and cooing friendship is establishing its close relationship. Two hands being two families can be thought of as two separate families trying to be together each finger trying to hold on to each other so the name ShakhaSakhi seems to bring more life to the image of the hand mudra. In Rajbanshi dance this mudra use to show the unity.

9. Padmananda



Padmananda: An image of the exhilaration and joy expressed in the human mind at the sight of a lotus flower, when presented in the form of a dance, can be the hand mudra Padmananda. This mudra looks a lot like a lotus and the five fingers of the hand are represented spread out in such a way that the distance between each finger is different, but the whole looks like a lotus flower. This mudra is used an example of the expression of joy, questioning something during folk dance performances.

10. Suri mala



Suri mala: It is the name of a flower. This flower is found in different parts of North Bengal but currently its consumption and production are very less. It is a traditional flower and with this flower, the social life of the Rajbangsi people of North Bengal is connected with the emotional and emotional organization. Also, the flower is very beneficial for the human body. Rajbangsi people use this flower in different ways to keep the body healthy. This folk-dance mudra is as culturally intertwined as the 'Surimala' flower and looks a lot like a flower. In Rajbangshi dance this mudra is used to show the flower in the dance.

11. Rajhangsi



Rajhangsi: 'Rajhangsa' and 'Rajhangsi' In North Bengal folk culture, a particular beauty is sometimes referred to as the male, sometimes female as Rajhansa and Rajhansa to describe her beauty. The pairing of male and female is compared to the swan and swan friend in their beauty, and the swan with its head down always looks very enchanting and beautiful. We find the word in many Rajbangshi songs specifically associated with these two animals in North Bengal folk culture and tradition. This mudra is mainly used in Kushan dance of Rajbangshis.

12. Bandon



Bandon: North Bengal is surrounded by forests, surrounded by rivers and mountains. In ancient times, people lived together in organized groups to protect themselves from wild animals. In order to protect oneself from other miscreants, there is a need to strengthen one-to-one human relations, and today it is common to form a bond between a stranger and another stranger, which is called Bandon in local language. The image of that is captured in this hand mudra, one hand touching or holding another hand so that the new stranger cannot move away from their life. This mudra is used in dance by keeping their hand in waste.

CONCLUSION

After observing, discussing, analyzing and reviewing Rajbangshi folk dance have taken a small initiative to give a folk constructive form of 'Rajbangshi Folk Dances', filing the need for a written formulation with easy sketch of Rhythm, Mudras, Pada and Hastasanchalanamovement. As a result of this creative work some nomenclature emerged which are as follows –The practice of imparting dance to the world through education is prevalent throughout India. Today folk dance needs a well-organized structure with specific nomenclature of each subject and a curriculum which was started with this report. Dr. Jayanta Kumar Barman and eminent Kathak & Folk dancer Riya Roy claimed that this report is a historical step through research to depict the circulating 'Hastasanchalana's in various positions based on native rhythm "Chanda-Laya" which is a historical movement and posture for the new generation of dancers or musicians. It will be beneficial for new learner to learn this art form very easily. These Hastasanchalana will be useful for academic perspective by a constructive syllabus.

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