

The Chhau Dance of Mayurbhanj: III

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In this part of the article we go over some technical aspects of the Chhau dance of Mayurbhanj, its repertoire, and its music. Notes on some Chhau dancers of Mayurbhanj who have made a contribution to the art are given at the end.

EXERCISES

Danda

The *dandas* are the first of the basic body-building exercises that a student of Chhau goes through in the *akhada*. In the main, the *dandas* are push-ups of various kinds in which the hands and feet support the body in its movements. The principal *dandas* are the *sidha danda*, *sadha danda*, *gala danda*, *dhenkia danda*, *pita danda*, *anthua danda* and *chakra danda*. Some of these *dandas* are illustrated here (Fig. 1, 2).

Baithak

The *baithak* exercises come after the *dandas*, and are of two kinds: *sadha baithak* and *jhula baithak*. In *sadha baithak* the trainee springs up erect from a sitting position. In *jhula baithak* he jumps forward to take a sitting position and then springs back to the original erect position.

Nuana

These are bending exercises. (*Nuana* in Oriya is to bend.) In the first exercise—*aga nauna* or front-bending—the body is bent forward till the fingertips are touching the toes. In the second exercise—*pachha nauna* or back-bending—the body is bent backwards forming an upturned 'u', the hands resting on the floor. *Pakha nauna* is a sideways bending, and *pithi nuana* an upward bending of the trunk. The exercises (Figs. 3, 4) are done one after the other.

Dehamaja

The *danda* and *nuana* exercises are for the whole body. *Dehamaja* (literally 'polishing the body'), on the other hand, is a series of exercises meant for particular parts of the body: the shoulder, the belly, the back, and the chest. Some of these are briefly described here: *Khuapita* ('beating the shoulders') is an exercise in which the shoulders hit the ground hard, the back bent low from a kneeling position. *Khuamaja* ('polishing the shoulders') is also an exercise of the shoulders with a wriggling movement. *Pithimaja* ('polishing the back') consists of back exercises. *Petamaja* or *chatia-gada* is an exercise

to tone up the belly, which takes the weight of the body with hands and feet off the ground. *Nun taula* ('weighing salt') is a balancing exercise in which the hands are firmly planted on the ground and the body raised with the legs in a horizontal position. In a second variant of this exercise, the trainee lies flat on the back and then—hands and feet resting on the ground—lifts the body clear off the ground to form an arc. (This exercise is called *sagadi* in Odissi.) Finally, *gajatom* is an exercise in which both the legs are lifted upwards, both the hands placed on the ground.

Asanas

Some yogic *asanas* are also a part of the training in Chhau, and were probably introduced during the stewardship of Maharaja Pratap Chandra Bhanja (1930–47). These *asanas* include *mayurasana*, *shirshasana*, *garudasana*, *padmasana* and *sarpasana*. Since these *asanas* are well documented in various publications, they are not described here.

MOVEMENTS

Dumka

Dumka is a high jump which lifts the dancer clear off the ground. There are two varieties, *ghoda dumka* (the jump of the horse) and *bagh dumka* (tiger's jump). In *ghoda dumka* the legs are folded back with a jerk after the take-off and the body too is bent backwards. In *bagh dumka*, on the other hand, the legs are folded in front while the dancer is 'airborne', the knees almost touching the dancer's chin.

Dian

The smaller jumps are known as *dian*. The main varieties are *chheli dian* (the jump of the goat), *harin dian* (deer's jump; Fig. 7), *sheul dian* (the jump of the sheul, a kind of fish; Fig. 8), and *mankad dian* or *mankad chiti* (the monkey's somersault). Brief descriptions follow:

Cheeli dian consists of a series of small jumps taken with both the legs, alternately to the left and right; the jumps are taken at an angle. *Harin dian* is a sequence of jumps with long steps like the running deer, one leg following the other. *Sheul dian* is a succession of smaller jumps with one leg — taken at an angle both to the right and left — the other leg raised backwards. *Mankad dian* is a somersault — an acrobatic act popular in the *akhadas*. It is not often seen in formal presentations of the Chhau dance of Mayurbhanj; it is commoner in the Purulia style of Chhau.

Palta

The *paltas* are turns and flings which characterize every piece of the Chhau dance of Mayurbhanj. They are of five varieties:

The *sidha palta* is a simple pirouette-like turn. The *ada palta* (Fig. 5) is a turn taken at an angle. *Hana palta* is a turn combined with action showing a killing. *Thukar palta* is a turn taken after hitting the ground. *Patiaguda* consists of repeated horizontal turns in the air (like the rolling of a mat, after which it is named). This *palta* is mostly used in dances

like Shiva Tandava, Garuda Vahana, Geeta, etc.

Hana

Hana consists of actions showing killing, and has evidently come down to Chhau from Pharikhanda, the martial art with sword and shield. ('Hana' means to strike, with sword or other weapon.) There are several varieties of hana (Fig. 6), which are all meant for heroic situations:

Khanda hana shows killing with sword. *Panda hana* shows the killing of a buffalo. (It has probably come from the buffalo sacrifice during Dussera.) In *kaiha hana* the killing is shown with the arms positioned like a pair of scissors held above the foe. In *jhinta hana* the killing follows a sudden drawing of the sword. *Matha hana* shows killing with weapon pressed down on the enemy. *Uska hana* is a killing accompanied by a simulated swelling of the (victor's) body. In *paita-sandhia hana* the hand holding the sword comes down from the left shoulder (where the sacred thread, *paita*, is worn), killing the adversary with a backhand blow.

Gala

Gala consists of various crouching movements derived from Pharikhanda, simulating the movements of soldiers passing through jungles. ('Gala' means to pass through a narrow opening.) There are six varieties of gala: *sada gala*, *uska gala*, *hana gala*, *phinga gala*, *lepta gala*, *pita gala*.

Habsa

'Habsa' is to crush. In Chhau three crushing actions are shown: crushing with both the hands (*habsa*); breaking the back of the foe (*pachha habsa*); and crushing with the legs (*godkuta habsa*).

Ghoora

Ghoora ('to turn around') includes various whirling movements, some of them named after the number of turns taken by the dancer. Thus *ekbhuda ghoora*, *duibhuda ghoora*, *tinbhuda ghoora*, *panchbhuda ghoora*, and *satbhuda ghoora* refer, respectively, to one, two, three, five and seven turns. *Pita ghoora* is a turn taken after action showing beating a foe. *Godpita ghoora* is a turn taken after stamping heavily on the floor with the feet. *Phinga ghoora* is a turn preceded by a leap in the air. In *godchhanda* or *chakra ghoora*, the turn is taken with the legs crossed. *Thukar ghoora* is a turn accompanied by stamping the ground with the feet. *Habsa ghoora* is a turn after executing a habsa. *Chinchra ghoora* is a turn after a movement of the legs.

Chamka

The *chamka* (meaning surprise) is a sudden jerky movement of the chest or shoulders to the beat of the Dhumsa drum. It is peculiar to the Chhau of Mayurbhanj, and is meant for heroic male characters. However, in *natki* — the climactic part of the Chhau

performance — all the characters begin with a *chamka*.

The chest movement is called *chhati chamka*, in which the chest is thrust out. *Khua chamka* is the name of the shoulder movement. The movements have been mostly used in the dances of Shiva in his various aspects. Sparingly, they have also been used in other dances.

Chauk

Chauk is a characteristic stance both in Chhau and Odissi dance. In Chhau the feet are placed sideways (at a 180-degree angle) and the knees are bent and also thrust out sideways. The left arm is bent at the elbow — the forearm being vertical to the floor — and the right arm is held above the head. The beginner starts his practice in this position (Fig. 9).

Dharan

Dharan means to hold — in the context of Chhau, to hold the shield and the sword (Fig. 10). Holding these arms the dancer moves rhythmically, throwing his weight to the left and right. *Dharan* comes at the end of a dance; the rhythmic movement helps the dancer relax, and recover from the strain of the dance.

Tabka

Tabkas are various kinds of gait, some of which have references to nature. In most *tabkas*, the legs are lifted high and then placed on the ground. There are some ten *tabkas* in the Chhau dance of Mayurbhanj, as described below:

Sada tabka is a simple gait. *Lahara tabka* is a movement suggestive of ripples in a rivulet. *Dheu tabka* is a step with a rise and fall like the waves of the sea. *Duba tabka* is a movement simulating diving in water. *Muda tabka* is a step employed to turn around. *Uska tabka* is a springy gait accompanied by a swelling of the body. In *thamka tabka* the steps are taken on the toes. In *chhalka* or *chinchra tabka* the steps seem to be slipping on the ground. *Uska janka* is a gait with alternate expansion and contraction of the body. *Bog tabka* is the high-stepping gait of a crane.

Uphli

Uphlis are movements involving the whole body of the dancer. They constitute the core of the technique of Chhau, and are largely shared by the Mayurbhanj and Seraikella styles. Juga Bhanu Singh Deo in his book *Chhau: Mask Dance of Seraikela* explains the term as “variegated expositions of body, limbs and footwork”, and enumerates thirty-six *uphli*s as listed below :

- Gooti kudha — lifting a pebble (with the toes).
- Gooti phinga — throwing a pebble (with the toes).
- Gobar kudha — picking up dry cow dung.
- Gobar goola — mixing cow dung with water.
- Chhoda diya — sprinkling dung water.

- Kharki-ba — sweeping the floor.
 Dhan or Dhenki kuta — pounding of rice.
 Kula pachda — husking of paddy; winnowing.
 Haldi, Chaol or Pithou bata — making a paste with grinding motion.
 Gadhi jibar — on way to bath; going to bathe in the river.
 Tel or Haldi mokha — anointing the body with oil.
 Khadu maja — cleaning of choories (wristlets)
 Pahud maja — cleaning of anklets.
 Jhunta maja — cleaning toe rings.
 Redi maja — cleaning the heels.
 Gadh bar (or dub bar) — the bathing dip.
 Jhoonti diya — colourful patterns on the floor (alpana).
 Sindur tika — putting the sacred vermilion mark on the forehead.
 San Uphlei — the small leap.
 Bod Uphlei — the difficult leap.
 Machh bhidka — piercing a fish.
 Machh dhora — catching the fish.
 Ghoda dulki — the canter of the horse.
 Ghoda tobuka — horse trot.
 Bagh dumka — leap of a tiger.
 Bagh rampda — mauling action of a tiger.
 Harin denga — the jump of a deer.
 Chheli denga — jumping of the goat & Polti bar — turning leap or summersalt [*sic*] in the air.
 Ardra Chandra — posing like a half-moon; crescent moon.
 Tara khosa — the fall of a meteorite or plucking the stars & Chand dhora — catching the moon (high leap).
 Majhur Pani khia — a peacock in the act of drinking water.
 Thur thuri — shivering motion.
 Onth muda — intertwining the intestine; twist of the intestine.
 Pasar hana — ready for kill; slaying the sacrificial animal; or Pranam — phari khanda style of saluting with the sword.
 Bagh pani khia — a tiger in the act of drinking water.
 Bota cheera — splitting the bamboo (a jump with legs widely separated).

[Chhau: Mask Dance of Seraikela, 1973, pp. 14-16.]

In Mayurbhanj, the following twenty-five uphlis are in vogue: *gooti utha*, *gobargula*, *chhada dia*, *kharka*, *chhunch dia*, *jhoonti dia*, *basanmaja*, *haldibata*, *jhuntia maja*, *ga dhua*, *mathajhada*, *munhpoochha*, *sintaphada*, *sindur pindha*, *odhani chhata*, *dhankuta*, *dhan pachhuda*, *antmunda*, *chingdi chitka*, *hanuman panikhia*, *bagh panikhia*, *kantakata*, *kantanika* (*kantaphinga*), *botachira*, *bagh machkhoja*. As will be seen by comparison with the list of uphlis of Seraikella, some of these twenty-five uphlis are peculiar to the Chhau of Mayurbhanj.

Bhangi

Bhangis are movements created for specific roles in Chhau, employing the techniques of *tabka*, *dian*, *palta*, etc., as needed. Tala-patterns are specially composed for these movements. In Mayurbhanj, the need for creation of *bhangis* would seem to have arisen with the widening of the repertoire under Maharaja Pratap Chandra Bhanja, and the

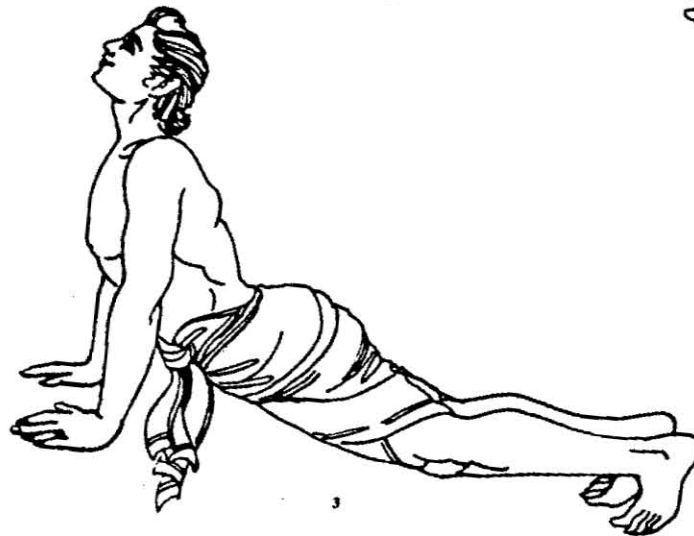
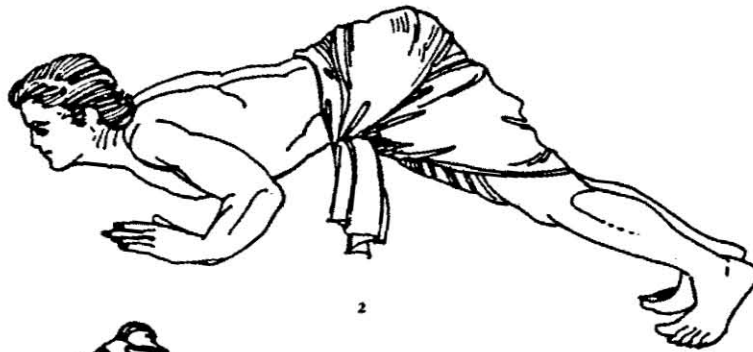
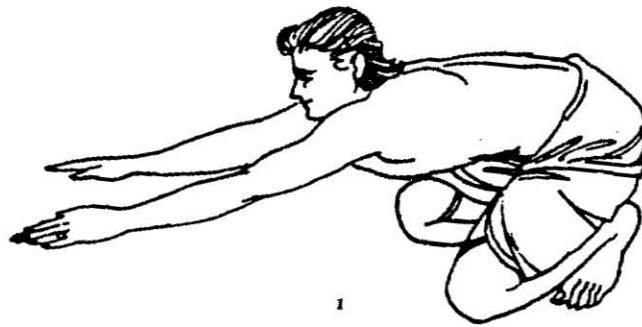
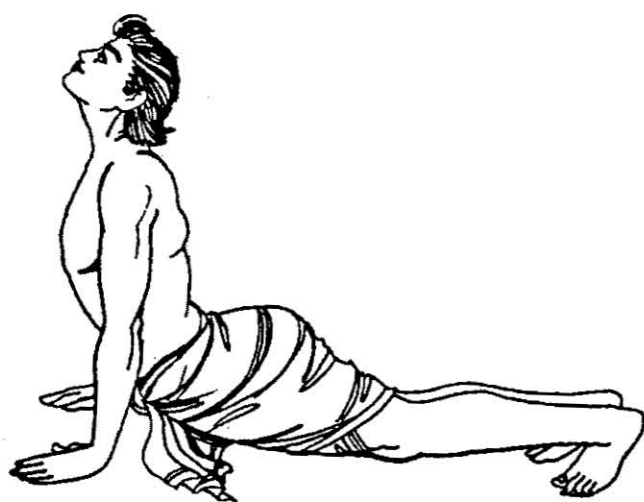
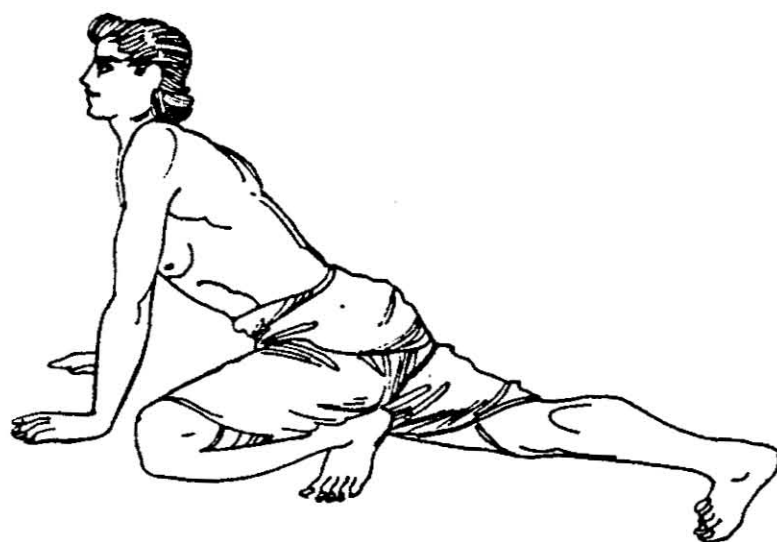


Fig. 1. *Sidha Danda*



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Fig. 2. *Anthua danda*



Fig. 3. *Pachha nuana*

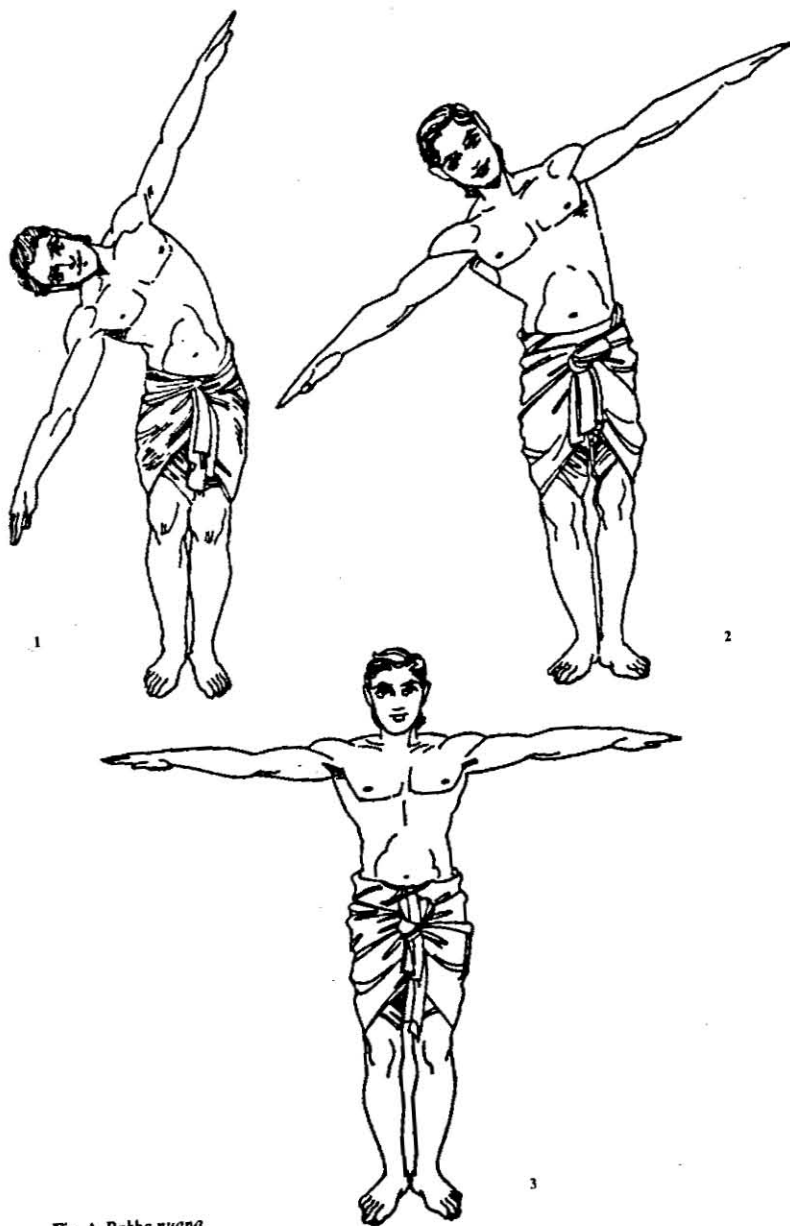


Fig. 4. Pakha nuana

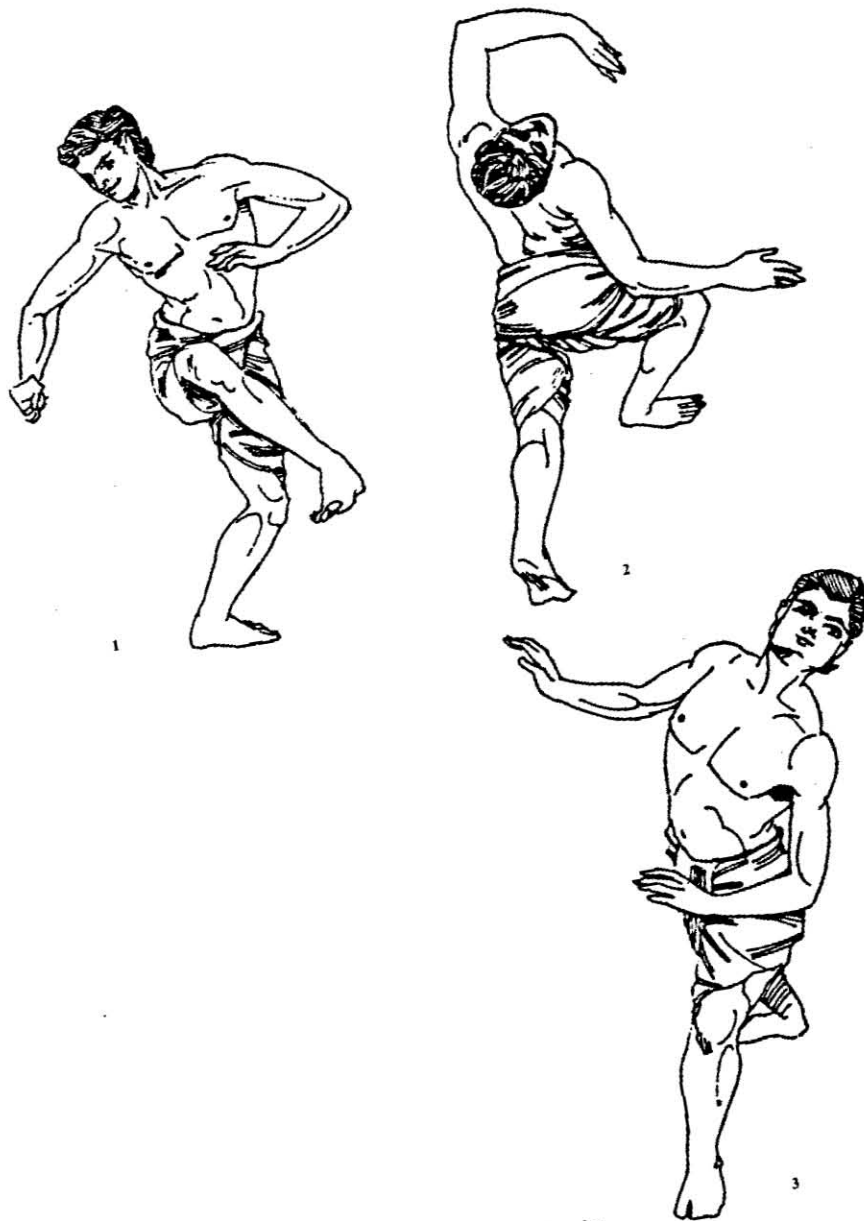


Fig. 5. *Ada palua*

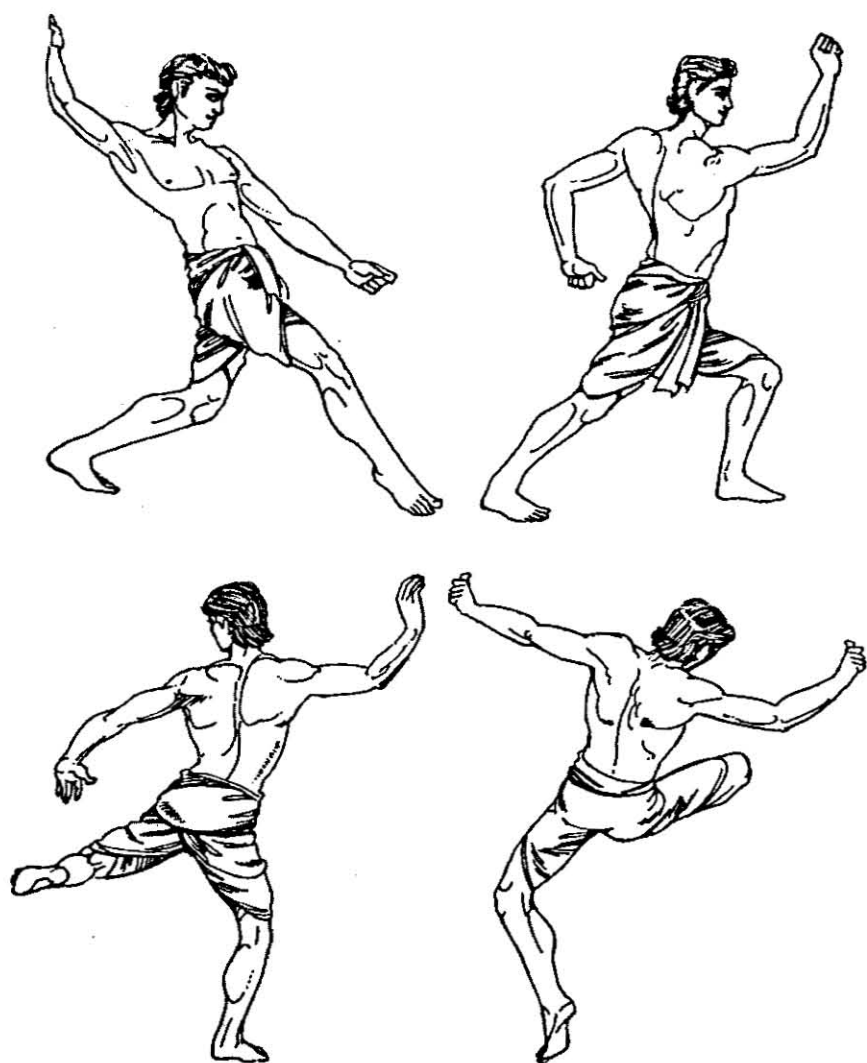


Fig. 6. Movements of *hana*



Fig. 7. *Harin dian*



Fig. 8. *Sheul dian*



Fig. 9. *Chauk*



Fig. 10. *Dharan*

introduction of non-heroic themes and characters, including females. Bhangis in the Chhau of Mayurbhanj are not to be confused with the bhangis of Odissi dance, which are static poses or freezes in the dance.

The Three Modes

As Chhau in Mayurbhanj developed from a dance of martial character into dance-drama embracing a variety of themes, three distinct modes evolved in the performance: the heroic mode (*hatiar dhara*), the gentle mode (*kalibhanga*), and a mix of the two (*kalikata*). The heroic element was always dominant in Chhau, proper to its martial origins. ('Hatiar dhara', literally means holding arms.) The gentle mode and appropriate movements came in, like the bhangis, with the introduction of new roles in the dance — those of females, gentle heroes and gods. 'Kalibhanga' probably refers to bending the wrist — the gentle movements of the wrist and hands adopted in Chhau from other dances. (This mode is employed only in solo dances, or dances with two dancers.) The meaning of 'kalikata' is not clear. However, this intermediate mode is for both males and females and developed, like *kalibhanga*, in response to the demands of a much expanded repertoire.

These modes relate to roles and not to items of dance. Thus more than one mode may be employed in the performance of a dance or dance-drama.

THE STYLE

Among the three forms of Chhau belonging to Seraikella, Mayurbhanj, and Purulia, the dance of Mayurbhanj alone does not use masks. Masks tend to restrict the dancer's field of vision, and by dispensing with them the Mayurbhanj Chhau has been able to evolve a wider range of movements and thus a more sophisticated choreography. (This is more evident in the group dances of Mayurbhanj.) The Mayurbhanj dances are 'composed' with some deliberation, they are well knit and finely phrased. Special attention is paid to the narrative, and as one watches the dance, there is a sense of dramatic progression.

The basic footwork and movements are the same in all the three forms of Chhau. Even in the matter of masks, while these are not used in Mayurbhanj, the dancers' faces remain mask-like: there is no facial expression. However, the leg movements and leaps in the Mayurbhanj Chhau are balletic in nature and may have been influenced by exposure to Western ballet in Calcutta.

In most Indian dances, the dancer strikes a basic stance, executes a sequence of movements and returns to the basic stance. But in Chhau the dancers cover the ground extensively, utilizing all the space available to them. The jumps, spiral movements, and leg extensions make this inevitable. No matter where the dancer is temporarily situated, the entire performance space becomes alive and charged. Indeed, space is made an integral part of the choreographic design. The dancers have an innate sense of structure. It is this sense that is dominant in Chhau dances. Gradual development of the dance, fine phrasing, and controlled movements filled with explosive energy characterize the Mayurbhanj style.

Segments of Presentation

As mentioned earlier, most of the early dances of Mayurbhanj were of martial character. These were performed with traditional music played on the Mahuri, the rhythm being provided by the Dhol and Dhumsa. The dances used to start with a sudden burst of vigorous movements — there was no slow progression. When mythological episodes were introduced and each dance was dramatically structured, the style of presentation changed. Three distinct segments were introduced in the performance: *chali*, *nata*, and *natki*. Three appropriate *layas* (tempi) were employed for each of these segments. Thus *vilambit laya* or slow tempo was used in *chali*, *madhya laya* or middle tempo for *nata*, and *drut laya* or fast tempo in *natki* — the climax of a performance. This sequence is briefly described here, based on current practice:

After the playing of the *rangavadya*, which builds up the atmosphere, the initial music of the dance is taken up and the dancers take a pose, usually in *dharan*, behind the curtain. When the curtain rises they majestically step down to the centre of the lower stage. This dramatic gait of the dancers, *chali* or walk, has given the name to the first part of a presentation of Chhau. In *nata*, the theme of the dance is developed and elaborated with various movements. Here the *bhangis* play a major role, and *bada tal* ('greater rhythm') is employed. *Nata* forms the core of the dance. The climax of the dance comes in *natki*. Always accompanied by the music of *Jhoomar*, it is characterized by fast movements and intricate choreographic patterns.

THE DANCES

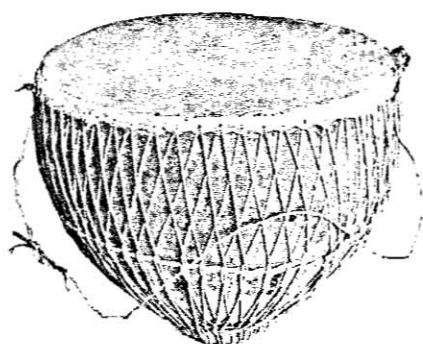
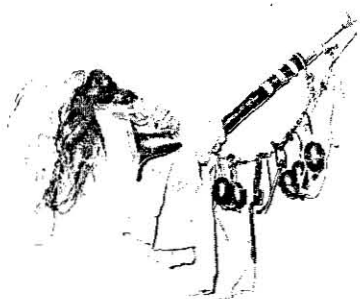
The Chhau dance of Mayurbhanj has a repertoire of over one hundred dances. The early martial dances with sword and shield were all designed to show power and prowess. There was no narrative element. The names are suggestive: Sandhamar ('Strong as a bull'), Dusman Pachhad ('Push back the enemy'), Bajra Maruni ('Strike a thunderbolt'), Ghani Ghoola ('Puzzle the enemy'), Maja Malum ('teach the foe a lesson'), Singha (lion), Paka Lanka ('Red chili'), etc. When characters were first introduced, the obvious choices were heroes from mythology or royalty. These dances include Maharaj Bahadur, Mahadev, Jambaban, Rangpanda, Nabat-Kabach, Parashuram, Pavanputra Hanuman, Nimapanda, Dwaripanda, Babrubahan, Kumbhakarna, Shikari, etc. All these were dances for one dancer or a pair of dancers. Thereafter episodes were taken from the *Mahabharata*, *Ramayana*, the Puranas and other epics to create group dances with up to sixty-four characters. A list of the dances of both the Sahis of Mayurbhanj is given in the appendix to this article ('Repertoire of Dances').

THE MUSIC OF CHHAU

Chhau has freely borrowed its music from various sources in the course of its development. The ragas of Hindustani music, traditional Odissi melodies, the Kirtan of Bengal and the tunes of *Jhoomar* songs have all found a place in the dance. In its original form of Pharikhanda and Paikali, performances were accompanied on the Mahuri, Dhol, and Dhumsa. This was brisk, loud music—pipe and percussion—played by the Doms, the traditional musicians in all festivals and ceremonies. The traditional music is still played



Chhau musicians — an abbreviated ensemble for a stage performance in Delhi (1990).



The Mahuri (left above) and Dhumra (left) from the Gallery of Musical Instruments, Sangeet Natak Akademi.

as a prelude to Chhau performances, in the form of compositions known as 'Dhumal', 'Joodan' and 'Rangbaja'. (These have been described in the second part of this article, in *Sangeet Natak* Nos. 127-128.)

As the repertoire of Chhau grew and mythological lore came to be utilized to create new dances, the need for a broader musical base arose. The existing music was inadequate especially for the first two stages of the dance, *chali* and *nata*, which were in slower tempi. At this stage Hindustani music, Odissi music, and the music of the Bengali Kirtan were introduced in Chhau. Both Hindustani and Odissi musicians were employed by the Maharajas. In some dances — Tamadia Krishna, for example—the music of Jhoomar was also used in slow tempo.

However, Jhoomar was more often used for the climactic part of the dance, *natki*. As Jhoomar is rhythmically strong, it was well suited to fast dances. In some dances Jhoomar songs were also sung in the background.

The tradition of Jhoomar was brought to Mayurbhanj by the Tamadia Bhumij, an immigrant tribe from the Tamad region of Purulia. It was further popularized here by the Raja of Kashipur (in Purulia district), whose daughter Maharaja Rama Chandra Bhanja married. The Raja of Kashipur was a great admirer of Jhoomar songs, and he even compiled and published a collection of these songs. (A Jhoomar festival is still held in Kashipur in the month of Bhadra every year.) He gave the music for a number of Chhau dances including Tamadia Krishna — so named as it was set to the music of the Tamad region.

There are still songs prevalent among the Tamadia Bhumij describing the Tamad country. The songs of the tribe are sung in their traditional festivals, both by men and women, and are often accompanied by dance. Not only the music of Jhoomar but the movements of Bhumij dances have been assimilated in the *natki* pieces of Mayurbhanj Chhau.

As mentioned earlier, the instrumental accompaniment to Chhau dance was provided by musicians of the Dom community. (Apart from playing at festivals, marriages, and other ceremonies, the Doms practised basket-making for a living.) The Dhol, Chadchadi, Dhumsa and Mahuri comprise the traditional ensemble. Brief notes on the instruments follow:

Dhol: This is a barrel-shaped drum played with the palm and fingers of the left hand and a blunt stick held in the right hand. Of the three drums in the ensemble, the Dhol is the most important as it provides the basic rhythmic pattern.

Chadchadi or Kadka: This is a short, cylindrical, single-face drum. The playing end is covered with goatskin, the other end is uncovered. Hung from the neck, it is played with two lean sticks and produces crisp percussion.

Dhumsa: This is a large, bowl-shaped kettledrum producing a deep, reverberating sound. Smaller varieties are hung from the neck, but the instrument used in Chhau is placed on the ground. It is played with short sticks. The Dhumsa has a body of iron made by local blacksmiths and is covered with buffalo skin. Sometimes, the body is also made out of the lower part of the trunk of a large tree, which is hollowed out and covered with skin.

Mahuri: This is the sole wind instrument of Chhau, a pipe very much like the Shehnai. The melodies for the dance are all played on the Mahuri. A number of *mahurias* (Mahuri-players) play in unison with the *dholias* (Dhol-players) and other drummers providing fairly complex rhythm.

All the musicians sway to the rhythm. The plaintive cry of the Mahuris combines with the reverberation of the drums to create the unique soundscape of Chhau.

EMINENT TEACHERS AND PERFORMERS

The first two teachers of Chhau in Mayurbhanj, Upendra Biswal and Banamali Das, came from Seraikella. As mentioned in the second part of this article (*Sangeet Natak* Nos. 127–128), they were invited to settle in Mayurbhanj by Maharaja Krushna Chandra Bhanja and were given large grants of land. Upendra Biswal was appointed as a teacher in the Uttar Sahi Akhada, while Banamali Das was attached to the Dakshin Sahi Akhada. It is said that it was one Ramhari Bebartta Babu who persuaded the Maharaja to build up a Chhau repertory in Mayurbhanj on the pattern of the royal troupe in neighbouring Seraikella.

Earlier, during the reign of Maharaja Jadunath Bhanja, a Chhau Ustad from Seraikella, Madan Singh Babu, had also been invited to improve upon the dances in Mayurbhanj, but that was before the Chhau of Mayurbhanj acquired its present form.

In later years, while Chhau thrived under the patronage of the rulers of Mayurbhanj, many eminent teachers came to the fore. Among them were Dibakar Bhanja Babu, Bisweswar Bhanja, Gouramohan Kuanr Babu, Bhabani Kumar Das, Jogendra Kuanr, Raghunath Singh Chouhan Babu, Chandramohan Tarei, Bhabani Jeet, Mohammad Reja Khan, Dinabandhu Das, and Sadhan Bisoi. Their students in turn have dominated the dance in Mayurbhanj for the better part of this century. Notes on some of these dancers follow.

Ananta Charan Sai

Born in 1915 in Baripada into a Kshatriya family, Ananta Charan Sai, popularly known as Kadu Babu, was trained in Chhau dance from the age of ten by a number of teachers including Dibakar Bhanja Babu (his maternal uncle), Bhabani Kumar Das, Jogendra Kuanr, Mohammad Reja Khan, and Sadhan Bisoi. For some twenty years he performed solo and group dances. During this period, he suffered a grievous injury: while dancing in the role of Mahadeva, the trident he was holding pierced his eye. He lost the eye, but continued to perform for many more years.

When the Sahis closed down after the stoppage of royal patronage, he was the only teacher who came forward to work for the survival of the dance. In 1949, with the cooperation of Bhabanishankar Das and Ramesh Chandra Mohapatra, he reorganized a group under the banner of Mayurbhanj Chhau Nrutya Pratisthan. He presented the famous Paik dance of Mayurbhanj during the Republic Day celebrations in Delhi in 1952. This was the first performance of Mayurbhanj Chhau in the Capital.

Ananta Charan Sai remained a bachelor in order to devote all his attention to Chhau.

As the guru of Mayurbhanj Chhow Nrutya Pratisthan, he engaged himself in imparting thorough training to dancers. Meticulously trained, this group of dancers earned a reputation both within and outside the country. Many performances by the group were presented in national and international events. When this group too was disbanded after the Sahis were revived by the Orissa government, Ananta Charan Sai joined the Chhow Dance Training Centre of Orissa Sangeet Natak Akademi in 1980. He continued to serve as the principal guru of this institution till his death in 1989.

He was the first Chhau dancer of Mayurbhanj to receive the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 1971; he received the Orissa Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 1984. He had a deep knowledge of the technique of Chhau dance. Among his well-known disciples were Srihari Naik, Srikanta Sen, Ajay Baitha, Surmohan Ghadei, Atul Baitha, Chhachina Bag, Srikanta Dhada, and Bankim Baitha.

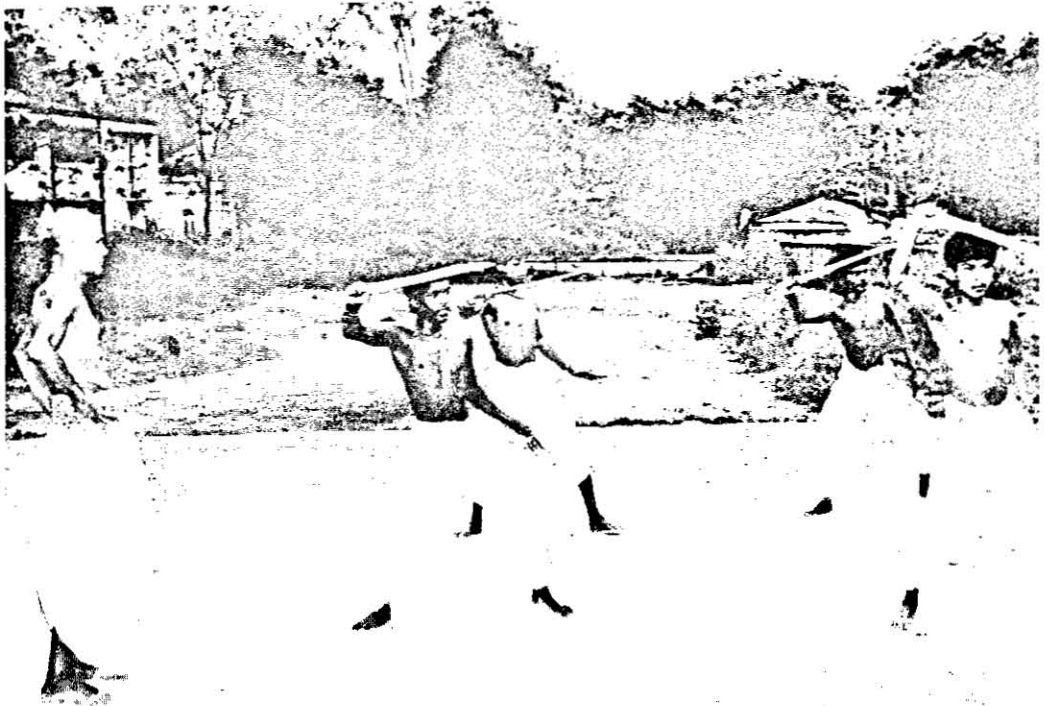
Lalmohan Patra

Lalmohan Patra was born on 11 March 1908 in Baripada. His elder brother Srinivas Patra was a Chhau musician. Inspired and encouraged by his brother, Lalmohan Patra entered the field of Chhau dance at an early age. He learnt dance from Raghunath Singh Babu and Chandramohan Tarei and participated in a number of dances of Uttar Sahi. Besides dancing, he acquired proficiency in playing the Dhol and Dhumsa, learning from Dwari Kuanr. He learned the music of the dances from Kartik Chandra Pal. He was one of the few teachers of Chhau adept in all aspects of the art.

When the Sahis closed down, Lalmohan Patra became the most sought-after teacher in the villages of Mayurbhanj. Earlier, the village groups had not been permitted to learn or perform the dances of the royal repertory. After the merger of Mayurbhanj, this restriction no longer applied, and the village groups became enthusiastic about learning the dances. For about thirty years Lalmohan Patra trained a number of groups in the villages. Some of the present-day teachers and performers learned their dance from him, staying in his house for extended periods. He joined the Chhow Dance Training Centre of Orissa Sangeet Natak Akademi as a guru in 1980 and continued in that position till his death in 1989. He received the Orissa Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 1982. In the same year he received a fellowship from the Department of Culture, Government of India, to work on Chhau music. He was a sincere, honest and hard-working teacher.

Udaynath Hansda

Born on 15 February 1919 in Mayurbhanj into a Santhal family, Udaynath Hansda was a teacher of the Pharikhanda style of Chhau. He had his early training in Pharikhanda from Sridhar Ranabaj. His village being situated on the Mayurbhanj-Seraikella border, he went to Seraikella and secretly learned the technique of Chhau from Prasanna Mohapatra, working in his house as a servant. After returning from Seraikella he learned the Mayurbhanj style of Chhau from a number of masters. Such was his fascination with Chhau that even as a boy of twelve he walked ninety kilometres from his village to Baripada to watch the dances during Chaitra Parva. He worked as a teacher of



Srikanta Sen and his young swordsmen (Baripada, 1993).



Ananta Charan Sai (*extreme left*) with his students in sword-and-shield manoeuvres (1971).

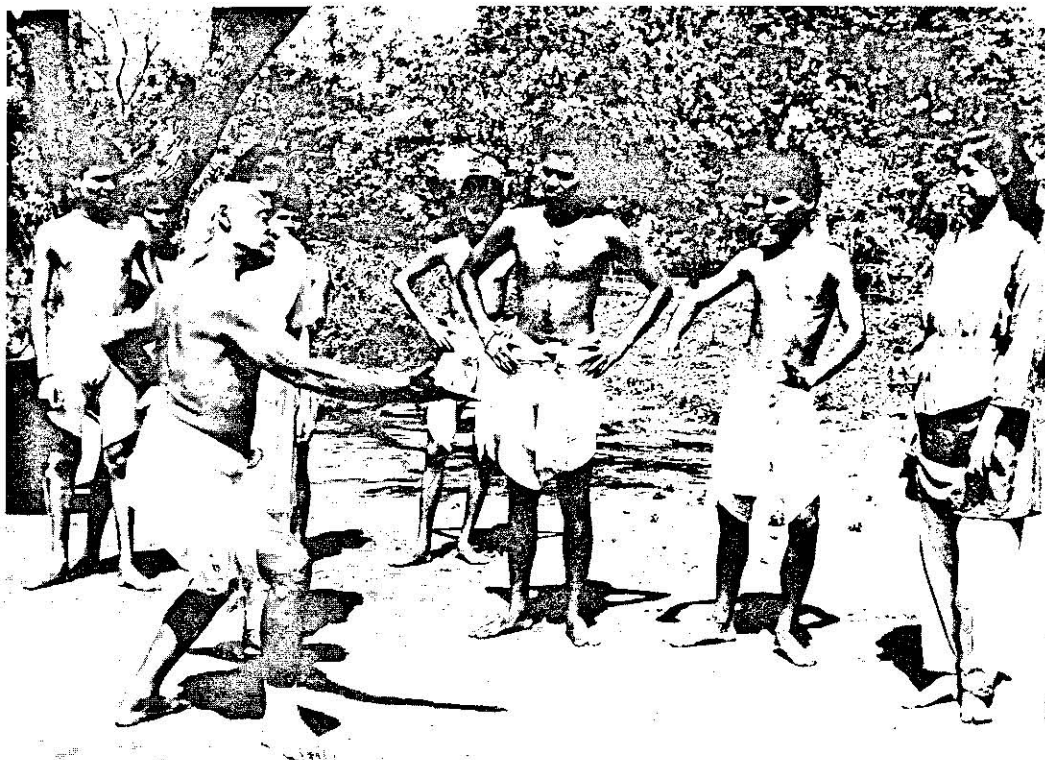
Pharikhanda as well as Chhau dance in the Bamanghati subdivision of Mayurbhanj, bordering the district of Singhbhum, for several decades. He trained a number of village groups of the area and choreographed new dances like Bastra Haran, Ushavati Haran, Sandhya Tandav, Ratibilap, Balakrishna, etc. He was also adept at playing the Dhol and Dhumsa. For his devoted service to Chhau dance, he was honoured by the Mayurbhanj Chhow Nrutya Pratisthan in 1993.

Srikanta Sen

Born in Baripada on 6 November 1927, Srikanta Sen was one of the prominent performers and gurus of his generation. The son of a traditional teacher (*abadhan*), he started his training in Chhau dance at the age of ten. After receiving his initial training from Dibakar Bhanja, he was meticulously trained by a host of ustads like Dinabandhu Behera, Bhagaban Das, Jogendra Kuanr, Bisweswar Bhanja and Mohammad Reja Khan of Dakshin Sahi. As a child artist he first appeared in the solo dance Lal Kanhaiya ('Krishna as a child') and won high acclaim. As a youth he danced the solo pieces Dandi, Rituraj, and Jambaban. He also danced in the lead roles of the group dances Baul Krishna, Nisith Milan, Aparna, Bansichori, Dwapar Leela, Bastra Haran, Maya Shabari, Kiratarjun, Holi, Dasavatar, Madhurmilan, Mahabali, Bhasmasura, and Rasalata. He continued to perform in these dances of Dakshin Sahi for several years. When the Sahis closed down, he joined the Mayurbhanj Chhow Nrutya Pratisthan as a junior teacher. For a few years he also worked in the Little Ballet Group of Shanti Bardhan at Gwalior. He helped to create some new dances for the group in the Chhau style. He was honoured with a bronze plaque at the Pacific Dance and Folk Art Festival in Seoul in 1975. In 1977 he was honoured by the Jodhpur Kala Parishad. Leaving the Little Ballet Group, he came back to Baripada to work again in the Chhow Nrutya Pratisthan. There he trained a number of young dancers, especially those dancing female roles. When the Sahis opened again he joined Dakshin Sahi as its principal guru. Srikanta Sen received the Orissa Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 1990. He died in 1995.

Chandrasekhar Bhanja

Chandrasekhar Bhanja was born into a Kshatriya family of Baripada on 4 February 1910. His father Bisweswar Bhanja was a well-known Chhau dancer and teacher. Chandrasekhar started receiving training at the Dakshin Sahi akhada at the age of ten. He received intensive training under Raghunath Singh Chouhan Babu, Bhabanijeet, and Mohammad Reja Khan. For about thirty years he was one of the star performers of Dakshin Sahi. Though he generally used to perform in group dances and duets, he proved his merit in the solo dances Jambaban and Rangpanda. He was awarded a number of gold medals by visiting rajas who were much impressed by his dextrous performance. The duets and group dances in which he performed include Nabat Kabach, Dwapar Leela, Holi, Kiratarjun, Maya Shabari, etc. He received the Orissa Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 1972 and the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 1991. After a fruitful performing career, he worked as the principal guru in the Chhow Dance Training Centre



Madanmohan Lenka demonstrates for the benefit of his students (1993).



Srihari Nayak (1993)



Chandrasekhar Bhanja (1992)

at Baripada. He passed away in 1996.

Madanmohan Lenka

Madanmohan Lenka was one of the star performers of Uttar Sahi during the reign of Maharaja Pratap Chandra Bhanja. Born on 20 June 1914 in Baripada, he started his training in Chhau dance at the age of fifteen. Groomed by eminent ustads like Raghunath Singh Chouhan Babu, Baishnavjeet Babu and Chandramohan Tarei, he rose to eminence as a dancer. He took lead roles in a number of group dances and also excelled in solos. He was Mahadeva in the group dance Kailash Leela which had nine ragas in its musical score and sought to show up the nine rasas. He received many gold and silver medals from visiting rajas for his brilliant performances. He was the favourite dancer of Maharaja Pratap Chandra who gave him large land grants.

When the Sahis were revived, he concentrated his energies on reorganizing the Uttar Sahi and imparting training to young dancers. He received the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 1987 and the Orissa Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 1979.

Hema Behera

Hema Behera is one of the eminent dancers and gurus of Uttar Sahi. Born in Baripada on 12 April 1920, he received training in Chhau dance from the age of eight under the eminent ustad Chandramohan Tarei. For twenty-five years he performed solos, duets and group dances. His brilliant performances in heroic dances like Rangpanda, Saptarathi, Sudarshan Chakra and Garudavahan are still remembered. He won many medals for his excellent performances. After the revival of the Sahis, he worked as a senior guru at Uttar Sahi for about twenty years. He has trained many of the younger dancers performing today. He received the Orissa Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 1993.

Srihari Nayak

Srihari Nayak was born on 1 July 1934 at Kanakpur in the district of Cuttack. But his home was Baripada as his father was employed in the police department of Mayurbhanj state. He received his training from Kandra Babu, Padmacharan Bhanja and Ananta Charan Sai. He was the youngest dancer in Uttar Sahi during the durbar period. Possessing a good physique and histrionic talents, he won much praise as a solo performer especially in dances like Nataraj, Mahadeva, Vishnu, Sabar Toka, etc. Besides, he also performed lead roles in group dances like Kailash Leela, Premik-Premika, Maya Shabari, Kiratarjun, Mahishamardini, Kela, Dhvajatal, etc. He was a gifted dancer of his generation.

Srihari Nayak worked in the Police Department of the Government of Orissa for about twenty years and then joined the Chhau department of Utkal Sangeet Mahavidyalaya, Bhubaneswar, as a teacher. However, he continued to perform through both these engagements and acquired recognition as a leading practitioner of Chhau. He has performed all over the country and abroad. He received the Orissa Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 1978 and the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 1998. Some of his

well-known disciples are Sadasiv Pradhana, Manas Rath, Subrat Patnaik, Achintya Behera, and Ashok Ghosal.

(This is the third part of a three-part article. The first two parts appeared in Sangeet Natak Nos. 125-126 and 127-128.)

APPENDIX Repertoire of Dances

UTTAR SAHI

Solo Dances

Ghanighura, Ekalavya, Nimapanda, Manjhara, Dundupecha, Sandhamar, Dwaripanda, Ajanbahu, Mahadev, Malliphool, Pavanputra Hanuman, Parashuram, Mayur, Shabartoka, Nabachaili, Udamchandi, Manohar, Ramshok, Babrubahan (Saptarathi), Nataraj (1935), Narad, Jarataveshya, Jangi Hatnagar, Manpiari Hatnagar.

Duets

Rangpanda (1942), Geeta (1942), Premik-Premika (1936), Shumba-Nisumbha, Krishna Balaram, Madangopal, Makaradhvaj, Taladhvaj, Pahlwan, Bajramaruni.

Group Dances

Paik dance (1911), Tamadia Krishna (1911), Odia (1910), Garuda Vahan (1943), Kailash Leela (1939), Gangavataran (1942), Deshbidesh (1937), Kalachakra (1910), Matrpuja (1934), Nabagraha, Mrutyur Abhijan, Devjani, Sangeetamay, Kelakeluni (1925), Kalankabhanjan (1932), Abak Chakra (1931), Mahishamardini (1947), Ahalya Uddhar (1936), Anasuya (1957), Bilwadal (1941), Atmadarshan (1935), Adinaty (1940), Meghadut (1944), Sudarshan Chakra, Usha, Samudramanthan, Goodiuda, Bhadrarjun (1938), Nithur Kalia, Chandaluni, Padmavihar (1939), Atmahara, Biswamitra, Deshardaka, Abhimanyu Badh, Madanabhasma, Saptarathi, Gamtara, Shibanurag, Sitavivaha, Nagadhiraj, Sita Swayambar, Parvati Parinay (1943), Usha-Jayanta (1944), Rakhal Raja, Chandrabhaga, Surasura (1934), Muktachori (1937), Sephali Puntara (1935), Kaliyadalan, Khadia, Asta Senapati, Haragauri, Parashuram Matruhata, Narasimha, Bansichori, Sagarsangam, Konark, Kela, Juang Bahashar (1947), Harabati (1947), Tripuramohini (1941), Girigobardhan (1933), Chari Sangat (1935), Parijathan (1945), Ushaparinay (1947), Meghamukti (1971).

DAKSHIN SAHI

Solo Dances

Chitaghanta, Raktapichu, Thulijang, Shisambar, Shabara, Mayura, Garuda Govinda, Jhapatrai, Madangopal, Hatnagar, Chailahatnagar, Singha, Birabar Panda, Jambaban, Nepali Bhalu, Baraha-Balakrishna, Rasik Nagar, Kancha Lanka, Paka Lanka, Lal Kanhaya, Shikari, Basughosh, Navidutt, Parashuram, Santali Parashuram, Kanchadona, Dandi, Kumbhakarna, Halayudha, Rushi, Jamunadasi, Bajramaruni, Chalak Chhandi, Magar, Mahadev, Udamchhandi, Basantakumar, Ramshok, Rangpanda, Nimapanda, Nagarjun, Nandadulal, Rajkumar.

Duets

Shumbha-Nisumbha, Krishna-Balaram, Nabatkabach Badh, Dui Sangata.

Group Dances

Jhatak Bijuli, Majamalam, Akal Salami, Akal Gudum, Bag Bahadur, Maya Shabari, Nisith Milan, Kiratarjun, Dwaripanda, Holi, Dasavatar, Dwaparleela, Rag Ragini, Bansichori, Card-dance, Hidimba-badh, Vastrahara, Rasalata, Rakhalraja, Niladribije, Bhagyachakra, Bhasmasura, Sadarutu, Nishardasa, Record Nacha, Asta Bajra Milan, Sakhigopal, Dushmana-Shakuntala, Chandrakalanka, Markanda Rushi, Lavanyavati, Swayambar, Nagardoli, Pankha Nacha, Kathiasinga, Pramilarjuna, Aparna, Padma-pasha, Bijaypataka, Usha-Anirudha, Nabat-Kabachbadh, Garba Ganjan, Baul Krishna, Giri Gobardhan, Man-Biraha Milan, Basanta-Raja-Rani, Manabhanjan, Tikayat Bahadur, Heeraphula, Hindusthani, Vidya Sundar, Bhairav Chakra, Diamond Jubilee, Madhurmilan (1948), Banabihar (1940), Jogajog (1941), Mayabati (1942), Mruguni Stuti, Swarnapadma, Naga (1944), Bagapanchami, Manasa, Abhisapta, Panchasakha, Dadhibali Krishna, Kanchivijay, Nachuni, Dhwajatal.