

EMPLOYMENT OF MUSIC IN INDIAN CHHAU THEATRE

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Chhau is a form of folk theatre tradition created by the Indian folk artists. The special feature of the Chhau theatre is the use of the mask like Kolam theatre in Sri Lanka. Chhau is prevalent in West Bengal, Jarkand and Orissa states in India. The Chhau theatre consists of three traditions known as Purulia Chhau in the Purulia district in West Bengal, as Seraikela Chhau in the Seraikela district in Jarkand and as Mayurbhanj Chhau in the Mayurbhanj district in Orissa. Chhau theatre has been created for the entertainment of the village folk. The music employed in Chhau is of classical nature. It has been developed by the Hindustani classical music and some indigenous music forms and folk tunes of Oriya.

The aim of this study is to inquire into the employment of music in Indian Chhau theatre. From this study, it would be clear that there are some special characteristics and common features among the Purulia, Seraikella and Mayurbhanj traditions of Chhau. The common features of all traditions are: In Chhau plays prominence is given to instrumental music and singing is of little importance, the musical party or the orchestra consists of two tribal drums known as *Dhamsa* (large kettle shape drum), and the two cylindrical drums known as *Dholor* *Dholak* and one wind instrument known as *Sehnai*. Use classical music and some indigenous music forms and folk tunes for the Chhau theatre. All the compositions have three distinct stages of increasing intensity in their tempo: low (*Vilambit*), medium (*madhyalay*), and high (*drut*), are special characteristics of musical features in Seraikella Chhau. The music of Mayurbhanj Chhau is generally classified into four phases: Vilambit, Madhyalaya, Drutalaya and Nataki. For this study, practical observations and interviews were used as the main research instruments.

Keywords: *Chhau, Folk, Theatre, Music.*