

FOLK DANCE 'DHAMAIL' OF SURMA-BRAAK VALLEY: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract

Dhamail is an important and most popular folk song and folk culture of Surma Brak Valley. It is a more artistic and vigorous dance as well as folk songs of ancient Srihatta and Cachar. Dhamail Dance depends on various elements like whole body movements. This article explores the themes of Radha Krishna Dance formation and the chemistry between them we get a glance through the form of Dhamail. Specifically Dhamail is performed newly known places like Kaimganj, Hailkandi, Cachar, Sylhet, Maymasingh, Maulabi bazar and its surrounding areas. It was originally composed by Radharaman Dutta, Kabi Sharad and other prominent figures.

Keywords: *Dhamail, Folklore, Rhythm, Rhetoric Art*

Introduction

Dhamail is a very popular and famous folk music and folk dance of the Barak and Surma valleys. Dhamail is an integral part of birth, rice ceremony, marriage, religious observance and festive occasions. Dhamail is used in many parts of North Tripura apart from Barak Valley. It is a very lively music and popular group dance.

There are several theories about the origin of the word Dhamail:

1. According to Dr. Sukumar Sen, the etymology of the word Dhamail is *Dambhalika*. Which means instruction.

"Teasing, Playfulness or Making Passes, a lover improper talk."¹

2. The name of Dhamail may be a derivative of Dhamal (from Sanskrit Dhaman, Vigor) or of Dhamali (from Dhayali-Sanskrit Dhaban, running or quick stepping). As the derivation of its name implies, it is a dance of Vigorous movements as contrasted with the Brata or Baran dance².

The use of the word Dhamali can be observed from the early medieval period of the Bengali language. Many believe that Naruchandidas composed the poem 'Shri Krishnakirtan' under the influence of Dhamali songs³. In the poem 'Shri Krishnakirtan', the word 'Dhamali' is mentioned in the sense of 'Rangaras' or 'Koutuk'. For example:

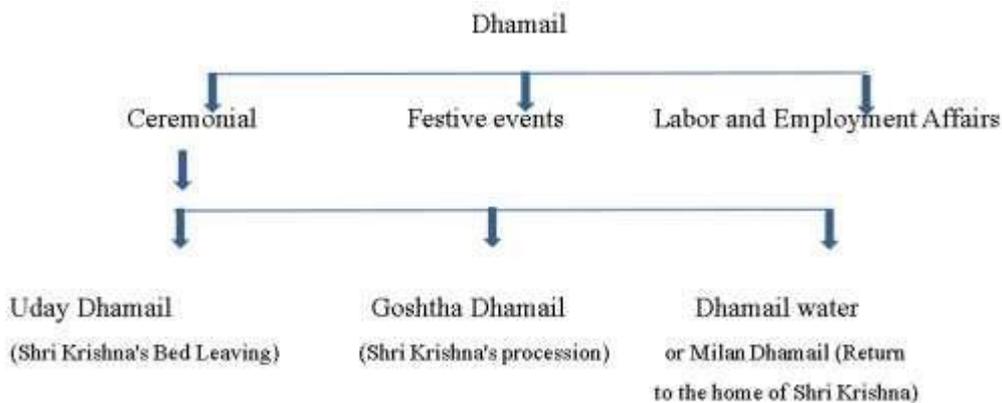
"Nohasi Maulani, Radha Samandhe Shali.
Range Dhamali Bale Deva Banamali."⁴ (Bengali)

Similar use of dhamali can be observed in other Bengali poetry of the medieval period.

"Radha Kanur Dhamali dekhiya sab sakhi.
Nayane basan diya Ghana hasyamukhi."⁵ (Bengali)

Dhamail is a festive song which includes dance. Although the theme of Dhamail is based on the love story of Radha-Krishna, its melody and rhythm emphasize separation and detachment, and are full of joy. Dhamail songs and dances are performed during the joyful moments of birth-feeding festivals, fasting, puja-parvan. Dhamail is composed instantly and orally around indigenous events, natural disasters, rebellions, defeats, and indigenous movements⁶. The uniqueness of Dhamail songs lies not in its dancing but in its vocal melody and singing style. Its control of voice, musical tone and expression is lively⁷. It does not mean that it does not have the melody of tragic and humorous separation. In terms of melody. Dhamail belongs to Bhatiali thanat. However, without Bhatiali's long pull or Meer's movement, the expression has completely changed."⁸ (Trans into Bengali to English)

Dhamail songs are divided into various parts. Renowned dance expert Mukundadas Bhattacharya has divided Dhamail songs and dance into three main parts. For example: ⁹



Again, some have briefly divided Dhamail into two parts (1) Krishna Dhamail and (2) Folklore.¹⁰ (Trans into Bengali to English)

Dhamail is the social group dance of the agricultural-based group society. The dance's scope and scope have been able to reach far beyond the agricultural-based society. Most of the formal auspicious ceremonies in the Barak Valley are celebrated with Dhamail songs and dances.

If music is called the soul of Dhamail, then dance is its body. Dhamail dance is not performed solo --- it is a collective dance. Firstly, one dancer then another, and other, in this way, one woman leads the song and dance. The rest follow suit, completing the dance with gestures and aesthetic techniques. Shantidev Ghosh describes Dhamail song and dance thus: "--- Wearing a saree and a cloth on her head, she stood in a circle, and the song began 'The couple met, look, there is a rai standing on the left of Shyam'. The song and dance also began with a timbale, but gradually. it began to increase in rhythm. This dance is called Dhamail. I guess since the songs are called Dhamail songs, the dances are also known by that name."¹¹ (Trans into Bengali to English)

Dhamail dance mainly depends on five elements: 1) clapping, 2) body movements, 3) hand movements, 4) foot movements, 5) head movements, etc. The perfection of Dhamail dance lies in the harmonious combination of these reactions. 12 The importance of Dhamail songs is a hundred times greater than the achievement of body movements. Guru Saday Dutta (1882-1941 AD) described each action technique of this dance in this way:- "In the Dhamail dance, the feet are sharply raised from the ground and with vigorous spirations alternately moved inward and outward while the dancers proceed in a circle in an anticlockwise direction. There are two principal schemes of movement in the Dhamail dance. In one, alternate inward and outward spirations are made with the right foot, the left foot being used only for taking short steps along the circle in an anticlockwise direction in the ring. In the other variety which is of a more feminine character, a light backward step is alternately taken with each foot and the ground is touched with a light tap on its toes while the heel is kept raised upwards. 13

This shows that rhythm and steps are important in the song-centered Dhamail dance. The 12-meter Khemta Tal Dhamail dance moves in a three-dimensional rhythm. Especially in the three-dimensional Chariti section, there are four movements, each movement has three dimensions. In the first dimension, the right foot leans forward, in the second dimension, the left foot is lifted off the ground, there is a tilt of the back body, in the fourth dimension, the left foot steps back, the body is in the sky, in the seventh dimension, the right foot is back, the step is straight, the left foot rises from the ground, in the tenth dimension, the left foot is pulled up and the body is moved to the right with a jerk, and in the twelfth dimension, the foot falls. This repetition continues with each step or there will be a pinch or a shake in the body. Within these 12 dimensions, the right foot leans forward and back, the left foot moves to the outside, and the left foot moves to the right side. The characteristic or identity of the dance lies in this special movement. 14 (Trans into Bengali to English)

The artistic flair has made Dhamail dance wonderfully captivating and visually enchanting. Renowned lyricist Shantidev Ghosh, after witnessing the Dhamail dance style in Silchar, wrote, "Clapping hands is a specialty of this dance. It is a sign of special skill to insert a large number of claps in a single step. While clapping, they lean forward. Sometimes they open both hands, sometimes they hold a piece of cloth in one hand and dance in a posture as if they are giving something from the basket with the other hand. They start moving in a circle, side by side or one behind the other. This dance took about fifteen minutes to complete. "15 (Trans into Bengali to English)

In addition, some other artistic steps in Dhamail dance have taken the dance to an aesthetic level. For example:-

1. In the Mandala dance, sometimes it is a feat to understand the rhythm and play the chutki with your fingers identity.
2. Face each other and clap, change partners, and continue the dance gradually by clapping with a third person.
3. A special technique of placing a garland on the head, placing multiple burning lamps along with various auspicious objects, and dancing to a fast rhythm and rhythm to keep everything in order which is easily available in work-related matters.
4. Dancing with a pitcher on your shoulder, changing hands while dancing with an empty pitcher in your hand, and again, when the pitcher is full of water, creating sounds by tapping it with the fingers of both hands.
5. The process of creating designs in groups, in three or four multiples of 8 dimensions, in the rice husk, sand, and a little clay spread out in the courtyard, is initiated, and gradually repeated, reaching 5 dimensions, 7 dimensions, and returning to the original dance. The artistic form that emerges on the ground is indicative of art and artistic knowledge.
6. The ceremonial Dhamail dance involves lifting the body off the ground in a dancing posture, placing a burning lamp on the head, and circling the two ends of a bronze plate placed to the side with two feet.
7. Dhamail dance is accompanied by Dhamail songs related to work. In this case, various physical techniques, actions, getting up and sitting, holding hands, holding the waist are used to compose the dance. In addition to clapping, drums, tongs, and sticks are used. 16 (Trans into Bengali to English)

The melody and rhythm of the song changes with the rhythm of the Dhamail dance. The songs are arranged in a permanent, interminable, and permanent manner. Just as the theme of Radha Krishna comes back again and again in the songs, the theme of Ram and Sita comes up in the Dhamail songs of the wedding ceremony. Moreover, the glory of other gods and goddesses is also heard in the songs.

The founder of Dhamail song in the Barak and Surma valleys was Radharman Dutta (1840-1916). In the 20th century, the melody of Dhamail song composed by Radharman can be heard in villages and neighborhoods, 'Vaibe Radharman Bole' (Bengali) . Apart from this, the verses of other mystic poets are sung to some extent. Even in the world of extremely modern mechanical technology, Dhamail song and dance is still popular and beloved.

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