

Name of the Element: Chhau Dance

Community/ies:

- (i) The dances as mainly come from communities known as Mundas, Mahatos, Kalindis, Pattnaiks, Samals, Darogas, Mohantys, Acharyas, Bhols, Kars, Dubeyas, and Sahoos.
- (ii) Musicians are from the communities known as Mukhis, Kalindis, Ghadheis, Dhada. They are also involved in the making of the instruments.
- (iii) Masks form an integral part of Chhau Dance in Purulia and Seraikella. Communities of traditional painters known as Maharanas, Mohapatras, Sutradhars are involved in the making of these masks

Region: Prevalent in the tribal belt of the bordering areas of the provinces of Orissa, Jharkhand and West- Bengal in eastern India. There are three district forms of Chhau:

Seraikella Chhau of Jharkhand

Mayurbhanj Chhau of Orissa

Purulia Chhau of West Bengal

Brief Description: Chhau is a major dance tradition of eastern India. It has three distinct styles *Seraikella*, *Mayurbhanj* and *Purulia* named Masks are an integral part of the dances of Seraikella and Purulia. Chhau dance has a significant role in the celebration of the spring festival Chaitra Parva, being innately connected to its rituals. It is a people's art as it involves the entire community. Performed by male dancers from families of traditional artists, or those trained under *Gurus* or *Ustads (masters)*. It traces its origin to indigenous forms of dance and martial practices. *Khel* (mock combat techniques), *chalis* and *topkas* (stylized gaits of birds and animals) and *uflis* (movements modeled on the daily chores of a village housewife) constitute the fundamental vocabulary of Chhau dance. The knowledge of dance, music and mask-making is transmitted orally. It is performed in an open space called *akhada* or *asar* and lasts through the night. The dancers perform a repertoire that explores a variety of subjects: local legends, folklore and episodes from the epics Ramayana/ Mahabharata and abstract themes. The vibrant music is characterized by the rhythm of indigenous drums like the *dhol*, *dhumra* and *kharka* and the melody of the mohuri and shehnai.

Chhau Dance- Inscribed in 2010 on the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, UNESCO.