

Full length Research Paper

A Critical Appraisal of Performing Art Culture of Baiga Tribe in Central India

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Abstract

Performing art tradition of a community is a true reflection of its culture and sometimes even becomes identity of a particular community. Performing art forms are an integral part of intangible cultural heritage of a community. Performing art culture not only includes the performance but also the associated procedures, technology, material culture, themes, belief system and rituals. Performing arts are oral traditions in tribal culture. The cultures grow as per their natural surroundings and it gradually develops accordingly. The Baigas are followers of one of the very ancient cultural tradition and claim themselves as first human on earth. A significant part of their culture is lost or changed due to impact of migration, acculturation, development and change with time and space. The Baiga dance and songs are custodians of their fast vanishing cultural traditions. This paper deals with the ethnographic study and critical appraisal of the tradition of dance, song and music among the Baigas of Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh. For the preparation of descriptive details, the qualitative data or information was collected from the 250 informants of remote as well as exposed villages to find out the traditional and changing aspects related to performing art culture of Baigas.

Key words: Ethnography, Demography, Performing Art, Dance, Music, Song, Development, Cultural Change, Market Economy, Awareness.

Introduction

Culture is the learned social behaviour, which is transmitted from one generation to another and is distinctive for each culture. In simpler words, everything developed by humans and associated with a society or group of related people, at a particular point of time, can be considered as part of that particular society, which is automatically gained by the members of that particular society. Performing art forms are an integral part of intangible cultural heritage of a community. Performing art tradition of a community is true reflection of its culture and sometimes even becomes identity of a particular community. Performing art culture not only includes the performance but also the associated procedures, technology, material culture, themes, belief system and rituals. Performing arts are oral traditions in tribal culture. Performing Art is described in dictionary as “arts or skills that require public performance, as acting, singing, or dancing”. (Dictionary.com Unabridged web). Performing Art is defined in Oxford Dictionary as “Forms of creative activity that are performed in front of an audience, such as drama, music, and dance”. (Oxford Dictionaries web). According to Collins English Dictionary, “Dance, drama, music, and other forms of entertainment that are usually performed live in front of an audience are referred to as the performing arts”. (Collins English Dictionary web)

Thus, it can be said that performing art is a creative (artistic) output of human skill in the form of public performance in front of live audience for the sake of entertainment, such as, Dance, Drama, Music, Singing, Puppetry, Story telling, etc.

Tribal performing art includes the oral artistic traditions performed for pleasing deities at the time of religious functions, festivals, special life cycle rites and for day-to-day entertainment. The various tribal and folk art forms are fast changing with time and space. Cultural change or transformation of culture is the dynamic process whereby the living cultures of the world are changing and adapting to external or internal forces. The various factors are responsible for cultural change, such as, innovation, discovery, acculturation, assimilation, education, developmental programs, migration, ecological change, modernization, urbanization, industrialization, etc.

The Baiga tribe is known for its habitation, hair style, tattoo marks and ethno-medicinal knowledge, dance and music all over the world. It has attracted the anthropologists, sociologists and other writers for their simplicity, traditional way of life, *Bewar* (shifting cultivation), and other cultural traits. Baiga Chak is famous to know their way of life and culture. Mr. Verrier Elwin had written in 1939 that the Baiga tribe is one of the few remaining in the Central Provinces of India that has not yet greatly affected by civilization (Elwin, 1939). This scenario is fast changing, but still seems to be true to some extent as they are attached with their traditions. A significant part of their culture is lost or changed due to impact of migration, acculturation, development and change with time and space. Hence, it has become significant to study and document indigenous cultural traits of Baiga tribe

before they get forgotten with time or may face assimilation. Performing art culture of Baiga tribe of Central India is also affected by this gradual change. Its forms, styles and themes are changing into the fold of market economy. Professional Baiga Nritya Dal is formed at various Baiga villages for doing stage performance on the call of various institutions.

Materials and Methods

Area of study

The ethnographic fieldwork is done in the Baiga villages of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. The Field work is done mainly in the Dindori and Anuppur districts of Madhya Pradesh and Kawardha and Bilaspur districts of Chhattisgarh. The Baiga villages covered are Karangara of Bilaspur district, Adchara and Polmi of Kawardha district, Sarhakona and Mekal Pahar of Anuppur district and Chada, Sheetalpani, Khapripani, Jalda, Bavna, Pachgaon and Kharidiha of Dindori district. The area of study has been carefully selected for covering the traditional as well as changing aspects of Baiga culture.

Research methodology

This was a qualitative research and the descriptive and exploratory research design was employed for this research. The various relevant anthropological scientific research methodologies and field techniques were applied for the collection of data (qualitative information) in this study, such as, observation, interview (guide schedule), focused group discussion, case study, etc. For the preparation of descriptive details, the qualitative data or information was collected from 250 informants of remote as well as exposed villages to find out the traditional and changing aspects related to performing art culture of Baigas. The informants (sample) were purposely selected depending upon their artistic background, age, experience and socio-political status in village from all the above mentioned villages in the area of study. The past studies and old records are reviewed as secondary sources of data for preliminary understanding. The ethnographic details about the traditional aspects are specially documented through interview with the old Baiga persons, traditional village headmen and artists, which are repeatedly cross-checked during the fieldwork. The data was collected from all the age groups of both sexes, especially through group discussion with the Baigas of older as well as younger generation. It was a qualitative research work based on gathered field information and facts for ethnographic documentation. Qualitative analysis of the gathered information was done for clear understanding of current situation.

Demographic profile

The Census of India, 2011 has notified 705 scheduled tribes in 30 States / Union Territories in India. The total population of the scheduled tribes in India is 10,42,81,034 (see Table-1) which forms 8.6 per cent of the total population of India. Sex Ratio among the scheduled tribes of India is 990.

Table 1: Scheduled Tribe (ST) Population in India

Place	Total Population	Male	Female	Rural	Urban
India	104281034	-	-	93019162	10461872
Madhya Pradesh	15316784	7719404	7597380	14276874	1039910
Chhattisgarh	7822902	3873191	3949711	7231082	591820

Source : Census of India 2011

In Madhya Pradesh, there are 43 scheduled tribes and their total population is 1,53,16,784 (Census, 2011) which forms 14.7 per cent of the total scheduled tribes' population of India, whereas the 21.1 per cent of the population of the state is scheduled tribe. Likewise, there are also 42 scheduled tribes in Chhattisgarh and their total population is 78,22,902 (Census, 2011) which is 7.5 per cent of the total scheduled tribes' population of India, whereas the 30.6 per cent of the population of the state is scheduled tribe. There are 75 particularly vulnerable tribal groups (PVTGs) in the central list of India and the Baiga is one of them which mainly inhabits in the states of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. A minor population also resides in the adjoining states of Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Odisha and Bihar. According to 2011 census, the total population of the Baiga tribe in India is 5,52,495 (see Table-2). The population of the Baiga tribe is 4,14,526 in Madhya Pradesh and 89,744 in Chhattisgarh. The major population of the Baiga tribe is found in Shahdol, Umaria, Singrauli, Mandla, Dindori, Anuppur, Sidhi, Balaghat, Kabir Dham, Bilaspur and Koriya districts of both the states. Sex Ratio among the Baiga in India is 993 (Soni, 2015). It is above the average sex ratio of the scheduled tribes of India, i.e., 990.

Table 2 : State-wise Baiga population in India

Place	Total Population	Male	Female	Rural	Urban
India	552495	277245	275250	528802	23693
Madhya Pradesh	414526	207588	206938	394032	20494
Chhattisgarh	89744	44847	44897	88164	1580
Uttar Pradesh (Sonbhadra)	30006	15572	14434	29432	574
West Bengal	13423	6765	6658	12872	551
Jharkhand	3582	1829	1753	3439	143
Bihar	543	276	267	485	58
Odisha	338	173	165	266	72
Maharashtra	333	195	138	112	221

Source : Compiled by the first author from the state wise data of census of India 2011

The Baiga Chak is situated in the Dindori district of Madhya Pradesh. It is considered to be the core region of the Baiga tribals. Its centre is Chada, a forest village. The Baiga Chak consists of 52 villages. The whole Baiga Chak comes under two development blocks i.e. Karanjia and Samanapur. It is surrounded by Maikal hills in the east and Satpuda and Vindhya hills in the south (Chaurasiya, 2009). Now, there are around 202 villages in the Baiga Chak area.

Baiga culture

The Baiga call themselves the first human on earth or the – *Mati-Putra* (children of the mother earth). By nature they are very shy and simple in living (Forsyth, 1871). The Baiga are a Mundari or Kolarian people located in the central highlands of India. The Baiga speak in Baigani and Chhattisgarhi dialects of Hindi. Baigani is recognized as a corrupt form of Chhattisgarhi. It is a dialect of Indo-Aryan Stock belonging to the Indo-European Phylum (Grierson, 2005). Actually, they speak a broken form of language spoken by their Hindu neighbours. It has been also seen that the Baiga officiate as priests of the local deities. They do *jhar-phunk* and also work as medicine-men (Elwin, 1950, p. 22). The Kol and Gond consider the Baiga as priests having knowledge of the secrets of the region's soil. The Baiga are strong believer of magic and good medicine-men (Tiwari, 1997). They have sound knowledge of numerous forest herbs and medicinal plants that they use to cure diseases. The Baiga have very limited resources for livelihood and most of them, if existing are often at the subsistence level. Basically, they are shifting cultivators. Staple food item of the Baiga is rice. *Pej* is made out of maize, wheat, *kodo* (millet) and *kutaki*. The Baiga are avid smokers. They are legendary drinkers of *Mahua* liquor. On the name of handicraft they do little basketry, broom making and wood carving. Both women and men love to decorate themselves with handmade and market made ornaments. The elaborate tattoo designs can be found on the Baigin's body for ornamental purpose. The *Jat* system found among the Baiga tribe is remarkable and it resembles with the caste system in India (Sharma, 2012). The *Jats* are endogamous in nature and they are seven in number. Another characteristic of the Baiga community is polygyny. It was found during the study that a number of Baiga males had more than one wives. The reasons may be varied, but at Pachgaon Raiyyat Tola and in Karangara village the spouses were found living harmoniously (Soni, 2015).

Performing art in baiga culture

Performing art is the main part of the folk art found among the Baigas. It is the main source of recreation and entertainment among them. On special occasions of the year, fairs and festivals, life cycle rituals, the Baigas sing and dance with the accompaniment of the traditional musical instruments. They do Chherchhera dance at the time of Chherchhera festival, Dussehra dance at the time of Dashahara festival, Bilma, Bhadouni and Parghouni dances in marriage, etc. They generally sing Dadariya and Phag songs. They also sing Karma, Jharpat, Reena, Suwa, Saila, Bilma, Bhadouni and Parghouni songs while dancing.

Musical Instruments

Tiski (wooden clappers) played by hands, *Mandar* (a long two membrane drum) hung round the neck and played with both hands, *Dholak* (a small two membrane drum covered with leather at both the ends) played with either both hands or the hand at one and with a stick at the another, *Nagada* (a conical vessel bound with leather strips and cover) played on the ground with two sticks at weddings, *Timki* (a small hemispherical drum) played with two sticks at weddings and *Basuri* (a bamboo flute) are the musical instruments found among the Baiga and used on ceremonial occasions and dances.

Nowadays, The Baigas use the traditional musical instruments as well also hire the modern band party at some places. Flute is less played, only along with other musical instruments at the time of dance. Dance troupes utilize all these musical instruments while dance performances. The Baiga purchase *Mandar*, *Dholak*, *Nagada* and *Timki* from the market and *Basuri* and *Tiski* are made by themselves.

Baiga Dances

“Dance is the movement of the body in a rhythmic way, usually to music and within a given space, for the purpose of expressing an idea or emotion, releasing energy, or simply taking delight in the movement itself” (Mackrell, 2017). In dance, generally we find the body movement and different facial expressions as per the dance form. The movements and expressions are fixed in different dance forms and thus, they suggest the name of those dances and are followed by the dancers of the group from generation to generation and it then becomes a tradition. Various dance forms are great heritage of the tribal people. Drinks and dances are two important aspects of the tribal socio-cultural and religious life. Rituals and festivals are immensely affected by dance and songs as they make the rhythm of tribal life. It is a general folk belief that the gods are also pleased with the dancing and singing.

Folk dances and songs are an inseparable part of the Baiga life. The dances start from the Dashahara festival and continue up to the onset of the rainy season. Some of the folk dances are only performed by the males like Saila and Parghouni and some are exclusively performed by the females like Suwa, Reena and Tapadi. Karma, Dussehra, Jharpat, Bhadouni, Bilma dances are performed by both males and females together (Elwin, 1951).

Dussehra Dance

This is a dance of young boys and girls eligible for marriage and provides them chance to select their life-partners from the available matches. This Dussehra dance is named after the Dashahara (Vijaya-Dashami) festival as it begins from the day of Dashahara. But, this dance has no direct relation with the Hindu festival of Vijaya-Dashami and its associated mythological story. It is an old customary dance tradition of the Baigas. It is a dance of happiness and joy. It continues for the whole period between Dashahara to Diwali. Thus, this dance starts from the 10th day of *shukla-paksh* (2nd fortnight) in the Hindu month of Ashwin (Kwar) and it continues upto the 15th day of *krishna-paksh* (1st fortnight) of the Hindu month of *Kartik*.

The males and females of a village have their own separate dance troupes for this dance. These dance parties are mainly composed of unmarried girls and boys along with a few elder married persons. If the female party of a village goes to another village on invitation, then they are joined only by the males of that particular village for dance. In the reverse situation, if the male party of a village goes to another village on invitation, then they do this dance only with the females of that particular village. The unmarried persons take part in dance while the married persons sing and play musical instruments and guide the youngsters. The male and female dance party goes from one village to another village and it is done by almost every village. This dance becomes an open invitation for the unmarried girls and boys of those targeted villages.

When a male dancers' party goes to another village for dancing, they are greeted by the male members of that village. Water and fire is arranged for them. The welcome dance starts. Firstly, the male dancers' party dances there in that particular village for about an hour and sings *Bilma* song. By that time, the females get time to be ready and meanwhile the males of that village leave and the group of ladies of that village comes with full preparation in their best attire and make-up. Any man from that village neither participates in the dance nor goes there to see that dance.

The women dancers are welcomed by the male dancing party of other village by having a dance. The dancing troupe of the women and girls also joins them and they dance together. Then, it continues for the whole night. The dancers make weird sounds while dancing on the beats of the drums. Both the men and women dance jointly in a circular motion, holding each other's waist. Whenever they change direction while dancing, they utter a thin peculiar bat-like chirping sound. The dance seems to be very impressive, beautiful and joyful. There are no variations in this dance form or steps and it is danced monotonously in the same fashion. They joke and also drink *mahua* liquor during this dance festival. The aged women play an important role in this dance program. They try to bring the young boys and girls eligible for marriage nearer to each other. The interested boys and girls get introduced by their aged married companions. The girls and boys have enough time to know each other during this dance which continues for almost the whole night. The selected boys and girls may also dance together by holding each other and the older women help them to make decisions for marriage.

After the dance program is complete they rest for sometime at night and in the morning the male dancers' group goes to the river side or any nearest available water body to get afresh and have their meals. Later on, the female dancers follow them and after reaching near them start singing *Dadaria* (extempore compositions) songs to tease them. The males reply them by singing in the same fashion. Sometimes this continues afterwards or also along with taking meals by the male dancers' party. The male dancers' party eats the dry food items brought by them. The Baigas call this dry food material, *Thola* in the local language. After some time around noon, the females come back to their homes. After taking meals and resting for some time, the male dancers again go to the village. They are welcomed by the villagers and offered drinks and the dance again continues. The women greet the male dancers by offering *Lai* (Parched paddy) and some fruits (cucumber, etc.) or sweets to eat. All of them joyfully talk to each other along with teasing the expected couples.

Here, the old women of the village provide chance to the young girls to have chit-chat with the boys of the dancing party and if someone likes, then they proceed further for marriage and talk for the betrothal (*Sagai*) and dance again holding each other. Their proper arranged marriage is then organized by their respective families. The dance continues for some time and then the male dancers return back to their village in the evening. At the time of returning, they invite the female dancers to come to their village for Dussehra dance.

Karma Dance

This is a traditional dance form of the Baiga tribe which is common to other neighbouring tribes also. Karma dance is held from the day of *Vijayadashami* to the start of the rainy season in Dindori district of Madhya Pradesh. This is similar to Bhojali and *Jawara* festival. Specially, this dance is done on the day of *Vijayadashami* (Dussehra) and Bhojali or *Jawara* during Navratra.

This dance is connected with Karma festival and some rituals. This worship is done in the Hindu month of Kartik (October – November). Before performing Karma dance, the Baiga dancers remember their gods and goddesses. It is generally done by the leader of the group. During worship, the leader of the group wears white dhoti and a red cloth. He worships Mahadeoji, Maa Sharda, Maa Parvati and her son Lord Ganesh by burning incense sticks, offering a coconut and ghee or dhoop to the fire. They make a sacrifice of red or black hen. It is believed that by doing this, they will please the gods and goddesses.

During worship of deities, the musical instruments like *mandar*, *timki*, *nagada*, and the dancing attires are also worshipped. The Baigas have strong belief that the person who does not do this, his gods and goddesses will be displeased. So, they worship all the materials of their adornment worn during the dance performances. This is being followed by them from generation to generation.

A bough of *Kadamb* (*Karam*) tree is fastened in the ground. When a man starts the drum-beat of a *mandar*, the girls come out from their houses and dance in a circle along with singing Karma songs. A few men play with the drums and other musical instruments like *gudum*, *tiski*, *chatkola*, and *timaki* standing in the center, while the other men and women dance in separate groups facing each other in semi-circular formation by holding the hands of their co-dancers. They keep on dancing following the rhythm of drum beats. A male dancer starts the song who generally happens to be the headman or leader of the group. He sets the rhythm of the song and sings the first line of the song. It is repeated by the members of the group. During singing this song they bend forward and proceed towards another group and then come back to their place. The second group picks up the song and

singing another line proceeds towards the first group in the same fashion and then returns back to its original position. When one group continues the singing and dancing, another group makes movement of the body by waiving their limb forward and backward in their own place. The dance starts in slow pace at the beginning and then it gets momentum. It then continues with low and high speed. The Karma dance is identified on the basis of dance patterns and foot movement. It is easily recognized by the people by hearing the musical tone of the dance form even from a distance. The drummers and the musicians also know it. It is told that to catch the rhythm of the dance form the musical instruments like *mandar*, *dholak*, and *manjeera* are used. In this dance, the musical instruments like *mandar*, *dholak*, *timki*, *basuri*, *tiski*, etc. are used.

Karma dance may be divided, on the basis of rhythm and pace of foot steps, into four forms i.e. *Karma Khari*, *Karma Khap*, *Karma Jhulani* and *Karma Lahaki*. Elwin (1939, pp. 434-435) writes that “there is a very great variety of steps used in the Karma dance, some of which are named as Khalha Karma, Tadi Karma, Lahaki Karma and Jhumar Karma... Circular movement is most commonly enacted in the Khalha Karma... In the Tadi, there is a quick left, right, left movement forward... Lahaki Karma, which is generally sung to rhymed songs, and has a powerful effect on the emotions, is a jerky, rather suggestive movement... The Jhumar Karma is a very pretty rapid movement, in which the feet are alternately brought forward and back very quickly... When the main attention of the spectators is diverted to the drummers who squat on their heels and hop vigorously about, drumming furiously as they do so, the dance is known as the Khalti Karma.” The male dancers wear *Dhoti*, *Kurta*, coat, and turban with *Kalagi*. They also wear *Ghungharu* (jingles) in their legs. The dance continues for the whole night. Although, the Karma dance is connected with the social and religious function, but now-a-days, it is considered more as a means of recreation or entertainment than any other thing. The tradition of Karma dance is continuing since ages. The Baigas have formed various dance groups which are invited on specific occasions by the government and other organizations.

Reena Dance

Reena is mainly a female dance form. It is danced during the period of Deepawali festival in the Hindi month of Kartik (October – November). In the morning of the day of Deepawali, the Baiga people assemble in an open ground at the corner of the village. The persons, who keep fast on this day, cross in between the legs of calf caught by two persons. At this time, Baiga women start Reena dance and song in the ground. Later on, a group of women dancers visits each house of the village and also pays visit to the families in the surrounding villages. They pay visit to all of the houses in the village. During Reena dance, they keep a Dauri (bamboo basket) in the center. This basket is filled with rice and a wooden parrot is kept on it, ignited incense sticks are waived and fixed on the basket. People bestow the dancers with grains, which is equally distributed among the dancers at the end of this festival.

Reena dance is similar to Lahaki Karma dance. It seems like a competitive dance between two teams of women dancers. Both the teams dance facing each other in half-moon style or semi-circular form from right to left. In this dance, the women clap by bending forward and thumping their legs on the ground on both the sides i.e. in left and in right by producing a thumping sound. The dancers sing rhymed songs along with the dance. The songs are finished in high tones while the dance continues with accompaniment of the musical instruments like *mandar* and *timki*. The women keep wooden *chutaki* in their hands.

Suwa Dance

Suwa dance is performed graciously on the occasion of *Gaura Vivah* in the months of October and November. During these days they dance in the day time and sing *Gaura Geet* at night with great pleasure. This is a female dance. No musical instrument is used in this dance. They dance by jumping on the rhythm of clapping. This dance is somewhat similar to the Reena dance. This is not the traditional dance form of the Baigas; it is adopted from the neighbouring communities. This dance is done by many communities in the area of Central India. A beautifully painted wooden parrot is kept with the sheaf of new paddy crop in a well decorated colourful earthen pot or basket. In some places / parts paddy grains are kept in the basket. One girl known as *Suggi* from the group keeps this pot on her head and the whole team makes a round of the village dancing and singing. They go and dance in front of each house of the village.

The whole team of women is divided into two groups. Both the teams face each other in a circular fashion. The basket having wooden parrot is kept in the middle and the women dance in a circular motion, bending forward while clapping. One group sings with clapping first and another group repeats the same afterwards. Thus, they keep on jumping and moving sidewise continuously in a circle. They pay visit to each house and in front of those houses they sing and dance. They are gifted in return with grains and bid farewell. The grains thus collected from each house are kept in a basket. Sometimes, they are also paid in cash. This gift is distributed equally among the dancing members.

Saila Dance

Saila is a male dance form, done with holding sticks in hands. Similar dance forms are prevalent in various tribes of India with different names. It is also competitive in nature like the Reena dance. The dancing groups are known as *Sailhar*. One group goes to another village and calls for dance. The village dance party also comes and they dance. As told by Sh. Mahku Singh Baiga of village Kharidiha, “it is danced for entertainment at present. Previously, it had some historical perspective because of the association of the Gond and Baiga with the army of the Gond Kings. Being victorious they used to dance by keeping sticks in their hands.” Saila is a prime dance form of Gonds and it seems that the Baigas have learnt and adopted it from Gonds. Now, there are no kingdoms, so the Baiga males do it while going for the hunting and fishing expeditions, as told by Sh. Ratlu Baiga of village Kharidiha. The dance is danced any time after Dasharaha festival in their own village or in other villages. One dancing troupe

from one village goes to another village and challenges the dancers of that village. First of all, the villagers greet them warmly. Then they dance and sing. The dancers drink and joke with each other. This dance can be observed by both males and females.

Jharpat Dance

This dance is performed with the accompaniment of the drummers by both the boys and the girls. It can be danced any time in the year. This is danced usually after Karma dance. This is a dance of the young boys and girls. Jharpat means *jharap* or *chher-chhad* (mock fight or lovely taunting). The male and female groups dance facing each other in two rows separated by the drummers beating their drums along with jumping and dancing. Dancers hold each other's hand and dance with the drum-beats. This is a simple dance form done by bending forward and stepping left and right then again keep straight and sing loudly. In this dance form, they lift the left leg and keep on the right side followed by right leg to the right, right leg to the left and left leg to the left side and repeat this sequence constantly. This is a competitive mode of action both in singing and dancing. Both groups sing songs and dance in reply to each other. One group sings and dances, then in reply to that another group sings and dances. It is danced whole night by replying to each other's questions in song form.

Tapadi Dance

Tapadi is a female dance. There is no drum-beat or any musical instrument is used in this dance. Only clapping is done in this dance form by moving here and there in two rows, so it is named Tapadi from *thapedi* meaning clapping. Sometimes, they face each other and sometimes, see in opposite direction. Lastly, they make a round and dance facing each other with clapping.

Tapadi dance sequentially includes three types of dance patterns. Firstly, the girls dance facing each other in two lines with clapping. After a while in second formation, one row of the girls turns its back to the other row and dancers bend their knees, waiving their arms, clap loudly. At last in third formation, both the rows join and make a big circle facing in the centre and clap bending downward and stand up repeatedly.

Vivah Nritya

In marriage songs and dances are performed daily by the assembled persons. During *Haldi* ceremony of marriage, the *Doshi* or *Terha* (mediator in marriage) lifts the bridegroom in his lap like a child and dances vigorously. It is known as *Dulha Nachouni*. It is then followed by the group dance of *suwasa*, *suwasins* and other gathered persons. Similarly, when the *Barat* reaches the bride's village, the *Doshi* goes to the bride's house for the *Haldi* ceremony and Neg. During this ceremony, the Doshi lifts the bride in his lap and dances vigorously. It is known as *Dulhin Nachouni*. This is followed by vigorous group dance. *Dulha Nachouni* and *Dulhin Nachouni* are part of Baiga marriage rituals. At the time of marriage, different other types of dances are also performed, such as, Bilma, Bhadouni and Parghouni.

Bilma Dance

Bilma is a marriage dance. Bilma literally means departure or desertion. Both boys and girls dance together at the flow of excitement. This is a group dance done in crowd manner without any fixed formation. They sing emotional Bilma songs during the dance. It is danced during marriage or at the time of farewell of the bride. The boys dance vigorously and the girls dance only moving their legs here and there. It shows the sorrow of the girls due to the departure of a bride from the village. The boys remain happy due to the marriage of a girl in the village, so they dance with zeal and vigour. Bilma dance is done on the beats of *nagada* and *timki*.

The dancers gather near the Dhuliyas, the Nagada players, for dancing and shout "*Kiring – Kiring*". The Dhuliyas play Nagadas with fast beat. Everybody starts dancing just where they are, boys and girls mix together, bending low, stepping up and down very fast. Sometimes, the men and even women make the obscene gestures while dancing. In this dance, on the occasion of marriage, the boys and girls dress up attractively with fine pairs of dress and ornaments. While Dussehra dance, Bilma dance is also played inter-village between the girls and boys of two different villages. At this time, they do Bilma dance before Dussehra dance.

Bhadouni Nritya

It is also a marriage dance. When the wedding party reaches the village and the *baratis* sit in the courtyard of the house, the female members make this dance. The women use the foul or abusing words for the in-laws to tease them and dance for some time on the beats of *nagada* and *timki*.

Parghouni Nritya

It is a traditional dance drama done at the time of marriage. It is a boaster of chivalry and greatness. It is enacted by the bridegroom's party on the way to bride's house. When the *Barat* (wedding procession) reaches near, but remains a bit away from the bride's house, the bride's father with a few family members comes forward to receive his *Samdhi* and *Baratis*, then the *Parghouni Hathi Naach* starts. Three cots and a few bed-sheets are used to make the *Hathi* (elephant). The wedding party borrows these materials from the bride's house or other villagers. Two cots are placed in slanting position over one cot lying on the ground, so that three of the cots are joined to form a triangular shape. Cots are joined in such a way that the larger sides of the cot are tied up keeping the legs of the cot in outward position. This structure is covered with the help of the bed-sheets to form the body of the elephant and a bed-sheet is rolled as a rope and tied at one raised end of the structure to form the trunk of the elephant. Having elephant is the symbolic representation of greatness and wealth. Pre-hand arrangement of this elephant structure is done before the wedding procession.

When the Barat reaches near the bride's house and the bride's relatives come forward to receive the wedding party the Parghouni Hathi dance starts. The male members of the wedding party start dancing by holding sticks and Pharsa (a kind of weapon with flat sharp edge and wooden handle) in their hands. They move their arms and show off their fighting skills. This dance is performed with the accompaniment of *nagada* and *timki*. The males dance vigorously with the loud sound of the drum by giving different facial gestures and swirling sounds from the mouth. The father of the bridegroom sits on the elephant. His funny actions and gestures amuse the onlookers standing there to see the performance and this dance drama. When the *Samdhi* (father of the bridegroom) rides on the elephant some boys hold the trunk of the elephant and pull it in different directions. The elephant also moves accordingly as if it is dancing. Drummers accompanying the marriage party beat the *nagada* and *timki* vigorously and thus, loud music is created. The *Samdhi* who keeps a battle axe (*Pharsa*) in his hand waves it like a warrior. The wedding procession moves ahead dancing towards the bride's house. The drum music becomes louder and louder as the marriage party arrives near the bride's house. The members of the marriage party also act like warriors and present different types of gestures pretending as if they are in some fight. They outcry joyfully. They also perform dance all around the elephant making various gestures. All their mime and mimicry is to create an atmosphere of amusement (Mahawar, 2014, p. 50) and show off of their valour and high handedness. This dance continues for sometime out side the bride's house.

After this mimicry the marriage party is given proper reception by the bride's side. The ceremony of Parghoni is done. The father of the bride comes forward and receives his *Samadhi*. He also climbs on the elephant and both the in-laws sit on the elephant and make so many gestures. The drummers beat their drums at this time to create loud sound. The members of the marriage party hold the trunk of the elephant and take the elephant here and there. Elephant is then taken inside the bride's house and the elephant dance is performed in the courtyard. Some persons again hold the trunk of the elephant and pretend as if they are making the elephant to dance. There in the courtyard of the house they dance vigorously for some time. At the end, the elephant is dismantled and thus the drama ends. It has no fixed form of dancing, but is a kind of jumping and entertainment to the public.

It is now observed that this dance drama known as Parghouni dance is gradually vanishing. Now-a-days, it is only prevalent in some interior Baiga villages. Now, the Baigas simply perform the Bilma and Bhadouni dance in marriages. So, it is a cultural loss to the Baigas.

Chherta Nritya

It is a dance drama of the Baigas like the elephant dance in marriage. Various types of masks of the wild animals are used in this dance. The loud sound producing drums are used in this dance and it is celebrated during the big Hindu festival of *Chherchhera* in the *shukla-paksh* of the Hindu month of *Poush* (January-February). Mostly, the children and young persons participate in this dance. On this occasion, the dance group goes to each house of the village and does the *Chherta* dance. They shout the slogan, "*Chher Chhera Chherata, Kothhi Ke Dhan La Herte Hera*". The dancers keep a wooden stick in their hands which they thrash on the ground and dance with the accompaniment of the music.

After the good collection of grains, the whole group goes near a water body. They cook their food. Meanwhile, a few children act like crow and try to snatch the cooked food. The other children kick out the crows and save the food. Thus, the drama ends and everybody eats the food.

Baiga Songs

The Baiga songs are sweet and related with their personal and social life. They are subjective and educational. Their songs belong mostly to the dance and often are composed to suit the day. Some songs are traditional, and are used with extempore variations. Baigas generally sing *Dadariya* and *Phag* songs. They also sing *Karma*, *Jharpat*, *Reena*, *Suwa*, *Saila*, *Bilma*, *Bhadouni* and *Parghouni* songs while dancing. The *Dadaria* are the forest songs. They are sung by the Baiga and other hill-tribes as they go to their work in the forest. Each verse of the *Dadaria* is very short and sometimes many of these verses are joined together to make a long poem, Salho (Elwin, 1939, p. 438). Mahawar (2014, pp. 28-29) writes, "Dadariya is sung by village folk while working in paddy fields, collecting mahua and other forest produce in the jungle or at any work place... Love and sex are the main contents of dadariya... The couplets are generally in question answer style and are addressed to the lovers. When dadariya couplets are sung in the fields, they are not accompanied with dance, but when a number of dadariya couplets are arranged in a sequence and sung as 'Salho', can be accompanied with dance". The *Karma* songs are much longer than the *Dadaria*. They are generally sung at the time of dance. They are occasionally rhymed and are then called the *Lahaki Karma*. The form of the *Karma* varies greatly and every form begins with a phrase which indicates the tune of singing the song (Elwin, 1939, p. 444). There is little to distinguish the *Jharpat* from the *Karma* songs except that they are sung to a different dance measure and lack the characteristic *Karma* introduction (Elwin, 1939, p. 454).

During the marriage ceremony a large variety of songs known as *Bilma* or *Birha* are sung. Like all the other songs, they give us vivid, intimate pictures of Baiga life. The Baigas like singing and dancing, so they have enough collection of songs. Due to living in the forest and having beautiful natural surroundings, they are always joyful and full of rhythm. Ritual occasions add to the effervescence of their social life. They sing songs while in work also. It may be the forest or the agricultural field.

Discussion and Conclusion

Thus, the life of a Baiga is full of music, dance and songs. Their dances have magically mesmerizing effect and the songs and music are full of love and affection. They enhance harmony in social life and help remove negativity and monotony from their social life. Now, with the changing life style and life standards, the cultural change is visible in every sphere of Baiga life resulting in cultural loss. The museums, research organizations and socio-cultural institutions can play a significant role in the

preservation and documentation of culture and can also play active role in generating mass awareness (Soni, 2012). The performing art tradition of Baiga culture need to be preserved and should be utilized for wide awareness.

The Baiga dance and songs are custodians of their fast vanishing cultural traditions. The Baigas are getting exposures and performing their dances at national level in various cultural programs organized by different institutions. They have made dance troupes (*Baiga Nritya Dal*) at various villages, such as Sheetalpani, Dhurkuta, Bavana, etc. and going for performances at various places on payment basis. This is an additional source of income for them. They have also devised a uniform dress for the whole troupe, as an identity mark. Their dancing style is also changed as per the requirement of the modern stages at auditoriums and amphitheatres. Day by day, they are developing as professional artists.

But, the present marketization of the art and the artist is hampering the traditional artistic patterns, dancing styles, songs and handicraft. There is a change and impact of the media on folk dances of the Baiga tribe. Even a few dance forms are now becoming unpopular. The tradition of *Parghouni Hathi* dance is fast vanishing from the Baiga marriages. It is now only found in a few interior Baiga villages in Baiga Chak area.

Although, the numbers of dance and song troupes are increasing, but still there is a lack of awareness for cultural preservation, as told by Sh. Arjun Singh Dhurve, leader of *Baiga Nritya Dal* of Dhurkuta village. The Baiga art and artists are getting affected by the modern day modes of communication (especially media), marketization and gradual loss of their traditional forms and essence.

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