

Folk Dances of India: Garhwali

Folk music, dance and theatre represent the traditions and cultural richness of an area. It sheds light on rural life, which is closely associated with inherent customs. Uttarakhand has a vibrant culture, and the diverse, authentic folk dance forms reflect the same. The fascinating mythical dancing damsels that dwell on the snow-clad peaks of the Himalayas are the inspiration of most folk dances.^[1] These folk dances mainly performed in groups while worshipping or celebrating. These folk dances are influenced by the public's divine connection with "Natraja", Lord Shiva, and the relationship of "Pandava" in Mahabharata to the Garhwali Himalaya. Dancing and theatre run in the veins of the Garhwali, the locals of the Garhwali region celebrate their joys and sorrows through dance.^[1] The five most popular dances of the Garhwali locals and their stories behind them are below.



Pandav Nritya

The Pandava Nritya describes the tale of the five brothers in the Hindu mythology of Mahabharata. This traditional cultural dance is a 10-12 day celebration that depicts the various

stages of their lives.^[2] It is believed that the energies of the five Pandavas enter the body of performing artists during the stage performance, which ends with a grand feast organized for the entire village. It is a simple narration of Mahabharata's story and is enacted during the occasion of Diwali in the popular districts of Chamoli and Pauli Garhwal.^[2]



Bhotia Dance

The Bhotiya tribe of the Gharhawali region, just as their name is well known for the dance of the dead.^[1] The folk dance performed by the locals is closely linked to the death rituals. A popular belief amongst these locals is that souls of the dead live in cattle's body even after the human body dies. By performing this dance, they believe that these souls of the dead would be liberated from the animal's body, and these elders would attain peace.^[2]



Barada Nati

The folk dance of Jaunsar Bhawar area of Chakrata Tehsil in Uttarakhand is performed on the eve of religious festival and celebrations.^[2] Both men and women participate and bring colours to this celebration with their fascinating colourful traditional costumes.



Bajuband

This is folk dance depicting love and sacrifice between shepherds and their flock. It is a love dialogue between a man and a woman sung and performed by the locals in folklore. It represents the love and passion that a Shepherd has and to what extent does he go to protect his flock from intruders.^[2]

Basanti

This folk dance is performed during the spring season when flowers bloom and new life is glowing in the int valleys of the hills of the Garhwal region. It sets the tone for the harvest season and brings new joys of celebration to the local community.



Khuded

These folk songs depict the suffering of a woman due to separating from her husband. The woman curses the circumstances in which she is separated. She is filled with sorrow and passion, which shows her love for her husband. 'Laman' and 'Pawada' are a few folk songs sung during this time, making us feel the agony and misery of this separation.^[10]

Many theories surround these folk dances say that the souls of the young unmarried girls who died with no funeral rites or the daughters of Ravana who offered them to Lord Shiva as his handmaidens.

Folklore of Uttarakhand represent the love, passion, agony, sacrifice, misery, and compassion of these locals and help us relate to them to share their feelings.

1. 1.

euttaranchal website. Folk Dance of Uttarakhand.
euttaranchal.

<https://www.euttaranchal.com/culture/folk-songs-and-dances-of-uttarakhand.php>

2. 2.

timesofindia website. 5 folk dances of Uttarakhand and the related legends. timesofindia.

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/travel/things-to-do/>

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