

Folk Dances of India: Bhangra



Punjab, the land of five rivers, is brimmed with energetic people full of life and colours. The folk dance of Punjab, Bhangra is a very vibrant and vivacious dance form being the ideal representative of the dynamism of the people and the state.

Historically, Bhangra dates back to the 14th to 15th century to celebrate the harvesting season. Eventually, Bhangra seeped into every happy occasion in the Punjabi culture. Earlier, the Bhangra was an amalgamation of music, beats of dhol (drum), chimta and the tumbi. In contemporary times the beats of dholki are an integral part of Bhangra. An array of other instruments such damru, dhad, dhafli etc. are also now being used in the Bhangra beats.

Bhangra is a fusion of numerous folk dances spread throughout the geography of Punjab. These dances include Jhummar, which has a 16-beat dhol cycle, from Jhang-Sial, Sialkoti from

Sialkot, Sammi etc. With the flow of time, a uniform bhangra routine formulated with the local dance forms being specific sections in routine.



The Bhangra dress, known as 'Bhangra Vardiyan', comprises bright, bold colours which symbolize the celebratory and commemorative nature of the occasion. Each colour, shade holds a deep meaning like green symbolizes prosperity, yellow symbolizes mustard and the red colour is the symbol of the occasion itself. The wide array and degree of movements in Bhangra require that the dresses must allow the dancers to move freely.

The music of Bhangra has its roots in the societal issues with love, money, relationships, marriages etc. forming the base of a number of Bhangra songs. The Bhangra songs are sung in form of couplets called Bholis. The traditional Punjabi romances

such as Heer Ranjha, Sassi Punnu, Mirza Sahiba etc. time and then find themselves in these Bholis. The brave deeds and heroic accounts of freedom fighters are also a part of the Bhangra music world.

The rate of evolution of Bhangra is exponential. Despite the evolution, the result is a rich diversity in Bhangra throughout the world. No matter what the style is all Bhangra dancers agree to the fact core principles of Bhangra which are that Bhangra is a dance of strength, power, grace and energy. In midst of bhangra comes the feeling of complete freedom and passion which sets free the human mind to utter joy and celebration.

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Guide ⇒ Prof. Manohar Khushalani

References :

1. History of Bhangra
2. Definition of Bhangra