

HERITAGE OF PUNJAB : THE CASE STUDY OF GIDHA

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Gidha is the most famous folk dance of Punjab. Among all the dance forms of Punjab, this is the most significant dance form, so it is very important to know about folk dance before getting into the depth of Gidha.

Folk dance is form of two words i.e. Folk & dance. 'Folk' itself is a very big concept. In ordinary words, folk means people around the world. In India, we use this word in different ways e.g. Mat Lok, Akash Lok, Patal Lok and Lok Parlok. Apart from this in phrases and idioms, we use 'JAN' in place of 'LOK'.

In English-Punjabi Dictionary 'LOK' means 'Folk' which is also used for Community, People and Caste.¹ Encyclopedia of Britanica² uncultured castes, communities of castes or the lower castes with ancient ideological affirmations are called people. Dr. Karnail Singh Thind says, "Folk means a group of people who has inherited the treasure of customs and rituals from generation to generation.

In brief, folk has different meanings. In this category, it includes those kind of people who are simple in nature and have simple skills inherited.

"Naach" (dance) word itself has wide meaning. Kahan Singh Nabha says, "Action Word/Form is dancing which means a series of steps and movements that match the rhythm and beat."³

In the Hindi, we use 'Nritya' for 'Naach'. Scholars have different views for the word 'Naach' (dance). According to the scholars, origin of dance started from imitating the various movements of nature like swinging of trees, movement of the birds etc. Indian scholars believe in mythological origin of dance where Lord Vishnu moved in the spirit of happiness after eliminating to evil from this world. These movements were symbolizes as dance form by Lord Vishnu. Then it was learnt by Lord Brahma and then by Lord Shiva and the whole world was blessed by the beautiful form of expression.

According to New Encyclopedia Britinica "The art of dance is an art of making the physical body active. This art is performed to make the human happy with the help of music."⁴

According to the views of Richard Karuss, dance is a form of art presented by an individual or a group at a time or place where there is a blend of music, movement and posture to express human emotions and inner feelings.⁵

As per the definitions above dance is a form of art which helps to express the inner feelings of a human being, using its various postures and movements depending upon the situation or even.

In various dance forms of India, Punjab folk dance holds a significant position/place. Punjabi folk dance reflects the culture and heritage of Punjab.

According to the views of Dr. Nahar Singh, "Folk dance, Folk song and Folklore reflects the inheritance of the community which carries on generation to generation as culture. Punjab Folk dance reflects Punjab culture and what has been inherited from generations."⁶

Gidha is the most famous form of Folk dance in Punjab. In the event of happiness, Gidha is performed by the girls with full enthusiasm. Gidha is the

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folk dance that represents Punjabi society, culture, methodology and historical aspects.

As per historical aspect of *Gidha*, "The most famous folk lore about *Gidha* is that an *Apsara* (*Angle*) from the court of Lord *Indra* use to come and dance in the village near a pious pond. And the girls from the village started learning the art form (*Gidha*) from there. The first girl to learn '*Gidha*' was '*Guddo*'.

As per the scientific views they don't believe in this theory still this theory prevails. The reason is many concepts in Punjabi Culture are based on Folk lore. If you see the epics (*Ramayan* & *Mahabharat*) you can find reflection of *Gidha* and can find many examples of the same in *Sufi* and *Kissa Kaar*.

During the time of *Maharaja Ranjit Singh*, when British rule was present in India, the presence of '*Gidha*' is reflected in the *Boliyan* (couplets) that were sung in Punjab.

For example :

Tera raaj ni firangiya rehna
Chuti na diti mere kant nu

The original form was present since the pre-independence period in the region of *Sialkot*, now in *Pakistan*, post-partition a lot of migrants settled in the *Malwa* region which is now a part of *India* and brought the tradition here. *Gidha* is also influenced by the geographical stature and condition of the Punjab. Still *Gidha* was able to sustain its original form.

THE PERFORMANCE AND PRESENTATION OF GIDHA :

Punjabi Folk dance *Gidha* is a '*Tali*' dance basically. *Tali Naach* (dance) means women clap one hand on another artistically which produce a sound like '*thap*', this sound is called '*tali*' or '*tali*' *Naach/dance*. In this dance, the right hand's clap is made on left. During this, a deepness is created in between both the hands which produce the sound of '*thap*'. This sound produced together by a group of girls becomes '*Gidha*'.

One importance of '*Gidha*' dance is that in this, along with clapping, folk songs are sung in the form of '*Boliyan*' and '*Tappe*'. *Joginder Singh* says, "*Gidha* is not only a dance. In this, the feelings are expressed while singing. These songs are called '*Boliyan*'. Like Folk dance, *Boliyan* also flows in mental waves."⁷ *Boliyan* of *Gidha* represents all the aspects of social, economical and political issues.

Boliyan are categorised in two forms :

1. *Nikian Boliyan* (small)
2. *Lambian Boliyan* (long)

- **Niki Boli** :- '*Niki Boli*' is a song form of two sentences connected with *Gidha* whose first sentence is introducing and the last is concluding.
- **Lambi Boli** :- '*Lambi Boli*' mean a chain of flow of feelings goes on. But sometimes, the feelings are denoted while exaggerating, e.g. :

Been Baja *Jogiya*, tenu dangi *Makki di Roti*
Patle je lak walya, tenu aadat pe gyi *khoti*...

Along with '*Boliyan*' the '*tappe*' in the form of poetry are also significant. These '*tappe*' are presented in the communication situations of '*Lambi Hek*' and '*Choti Hek*'.

Dr. Nahar Singh says about a tappa "Tappa is a dramatic form of song whose single line is sung from low pitch to high pitch. Every single line holds numerous meanings in it."⁸

In order to maintain continuity between the 'Tali' (clap), 'Boli' or the 'Words of Tappe', Balle-Balle or Shava-Shava is added.

In the 'Boliyan' and 'Tappe' of Punjabi folk dance Gidha, many layers of culture and heritage of Punjab are expressed. Either 'Boliyan' are formed in unconscious form or in conscious form, 'Boliyan' present a picture of popular cultural and social norms, values and heritage of Punjab.

Mimicry also plays an important role in the Giddha. Usually in this one girl plays the part of an aging bridegroom and another plays his young bride, or one will play a cantankerous sister-in-law, while another girl play a humble and doting wife. Since this giddha dance involves so many personal themes, it is actually seen as a creative way of giving expression to one's emotions. The Giddha may include scenes from the village life, where women are seen spinning cotton, fetching water from the well and grinding. These scenes of Giddha are accompanied by fitting Bolies, no musical instruments are played during Giddha, except "dholak", to add beats.

Folk dance 'Gidha' is a dance which does not need any particular stage to be performed. It could be performed in the open lobby of house, terrace, street turns, edge of fields, open ground, beside pond and beside rivers etc. Gidha is that type of folk dance in which neither boliyan ends nor the postures of the dancers, it continued with full of enthusiasm.

Number of girls or Gidha performers is not specific. Any number of women/girls, at any place could present this dance any time. The main significance of the dance is that the dance is not performed by a particular person for particular audience. This is a dance to be performed for a group of people by a group of people who represent masses of Punjab.

TYPES OF GIDHA :

For Punjabi folk dance 'Gidha' there are different affirmations of experts. Davinder Satyarthi categorises Gidha in eight parts, Dr. Iqbal Kaur has categorised it in five parts, the popular expert of folklore Dr. Nahar Singh places it in four different social definitions e.g. Gidha of Teej/Tiyan, Engagement, Marriage and Lohri.⁹

Nowadays in Punjab, Gidha is found to be in different categories as Gidha of Tiyan, Marriage, Trinjan, Lohri, Schools, Colleges and Universities etc. Every form of Gidha is started with the name of Gurus or Peer. In the beginning, one woman enters in the semi-circle and sings a 'boli' e.g. :

Guru Dhia ke me pava Boli,

Nee sab nu fateh Bulava.

After the steps of 'Manglacharan', the 'Boliyan' related with situations, offers, functions and humour of life are sung and loud dance steps are presented with the echo of sounds of clapping.

- **Gidha of Tiyan :-** This Gidha is very significant in the heritage of Punjab. This is performed in the month of 'Sawan'. Actually, this month symbolises happiness in Punjab. In this month, farmers of Punjab enroot the crops of haari (wheat) and bows the crops of Sauni (rice)... Thus the males are occupied in the field works. But Punjabi women express their feelings of their with them in such a pleasant weather. Newly married women go back to their parents' houses, e.g. :

Saun Mahine Din Gidhe de
 Kudiya Rall Ke Ayia..
 Nachan, Kudan, Jhutan Peenga
 Wadya Ghara diya jaiya..
 Gidha Pa rhiya, Nanda te Bharjaiya...



Image-1 : Gidha of Tiyan

The trees of Oak and Banyan are significant for their dense shadow and powerful branches to be used for swings. With the pendulum motion of swing, the mental and physical exercise of women take place. In this Gidha, women of all ages, unmarried, married, young and old women participate, e.g. :

Saun Mahina Din Gidhe De..
 Sab Saheliya Ayia..
 Bhij gyi rooh Mitra..
 Sham Ghata chad ayia..

The feelings of various demographic women are attached with Gidha. So, by this dance, different relationships are represented, e.g. the Gidha for brothers, love of lover, love for devar (husband's younger brother), relation with Jeth (husband's elder brother), unfilled dreams and wishes of life, the separateness of migrated husband, fight with Sass (husband's mother) and the characters of idle drug addicts, saints and unmarried men of villages are presented in the dance. In short the Gidha of Tiyan could be called as the dance of love, affection and separateness.

- **Gidha of Trinjan** :- More than a form of Gidha, it is an event for Gidha to be performed. Young and old women participate in this. The major survival of people is dependent on farming. If males of Punjab bow and reap the crops, Punjabi women manage, purify, clean and use them, e.g. Jatt (a male Punjabi Landlord) bows the crop of cotton and Jatti (a female Punjabi Landlady) gathers, arranges, spins and makes cotton fabric.

The main significance of the nature of Punjabi females is that they can not sit alone and prefers to sit in a group. When women finish their household chores, spin cotton in a open space of house, the place. Space is called 'Trinjan'. There, the women share their happiness and grieves together. To take relief from the tension and stress, one woman starts dance and other associates her, this is called the Gidha of Trinjan. In this Gidha, the same kind of steps are followed for same kind of 'Boli', e.g.:

Edhar kanka odhar kanka
 Wich kanka de toye..
 Sass meri nu kutte le gye
 Bde tamashe hoye..
 le lo dal faliya
 le lo dal faliya...



Image-2 : Gidha of Trinjan

In this form of Gidha, the feelings of relationships are presented along with the household chores.

- **Gidha of Lohri :-** The celebrations of traditions of birth holds important place in the heritage of Punjab. To celebrate 'Athva' (the eighth day after birth), women gather at the house. Mother of child is dressed up and 'Gidha' is performed in joy. Another aspect is that the birth of boy child is very significant. So, the festival of Lohri is celebrated, e.g.:

Ik veer deyi ve Rabba
Sonh khan nu bda chit kardaa...



- **Gidha of Marriage :-** The *Gidha* 'Viah da *Gidha*' is also called 'Viauhla *Gidha*'. The origin of the *Gidha* is from the dance performed at the house where marriage celebrations are going on for welcome ceremony of the bride or groom's nanaka mel (Group of relatives who come from maternal side of family). In this welcome *Gidha*, nankiya te dadkiya (Maternal and paternal side of the family) sing Boliyan named 'Sithaniya' and express their feelings with physical steps. This form of *Gidha* is further categorised in two terms :

- (a) Jaago Kadni
- (b) Chajj Kutna

- **Jaago Kadni (To circuvate Jaago in the streets of village):-** One woman holds a 'gagar', places 'thali' on it with the help of wet wheat, 7-11 divas'/lights are blown in the thali, and the woman holds it on her head, moves around the streets of village and all the guest women perform *Gidha*, e.g.:

Viauhle *Gidhe* wich aa nichanni,
Tera Laung lishkare mare,
Khul ke nach le ni,
Koonj pataliye Naare.



Image-4 : Jagger

The sisters, sister-in-law of the bride or groom's mother play a significant role in this *Gidha*. Every young woman and boy are keen to watch these women and the nanke and Dadke dance satirically, e.g. :



Gidha, *Gidha* layi aa melne,
Gidha Pau Bathera,
Akh Put ke Jhak melne,
Bharya Pya Banera,
Je tenu dhup lagdi,
Le la chadra mera.

It is important to note that all the people come to see this *Gidha*. Such an association of Punjabis leads the heritage of Punjab in the form of *Gidha*.

- **Chajj Kutna (To beat Chajj) :-** 'Chajj' is beaten after Jagger in marriage. This tradition is performed by the brothers and sisters of mother. The direct satire are done on *nanke* and *dadke* in the form of Boliyan.

In this *Gidha*, different kinds of steps are performed as beating heels on earth, raising arms, dancing with waist etc. So, the *Gidha* of marriage is known as the *Gidha* of joy, happiness, satire and naughtiness.

- **The *Gidha* of Stage (*Gidha* of Schools, Colleges and Universities):-** This *Gidha* is originated in 1956 and performed for various events



Image-5 : Chajj Kutna



particularly. Smt. Harbhajan Kaur Dhillon writes in her book "Gidha ate isdi Peshkari" that in 1956, PEPSU (Patiala and East Panjab States Union) sent a group of male dancers to Delhi for 'Jhumar'. So, the female folk dance Gidha was presented at Govt. Girls College for Women, Ludhiana at the same year. The tradition to perform Gidha on stage became after this. From 1957 to now, folk dance Gidha presents the heritage of Punjab in schools, colleges and universities in the form of youth festival. Except these, the presentation of Gidha began in every program of TV and films.

STEPS/ACTIONS :- Many steps are being performed in Punjabi folk dance 'Gidha' which could not be limited to particular steps. Gidha steps keep on changing in accordance with 'Boliyan' and 'Gidha' but many steps are found in Gidha of all kinds, e.g. clapping with hands, raising arms, dancing with waist, making sounds with lips, beating heels, mimicry, picking and revolving holding heavy thing in teeth etc. Various folk heroes, heroines, warriors and brave personalities of Punjab are also presented through different actions of Gidha.

Image-7 : Steps of Gidha

COSTUME :- In the heritage of Punjab, it could be performed in any dress but as according to heritage of Punjab 'Ghagra' is very significant. 'Ghagras' are of different colours. But in Gidha, Ghagra of Kala Soof is most popular. It is frequently used in the Gidha of Tiyan and marriage. This Ghagra glorifies the beauty of Punjabi women. The Kurti (TOP) of any colour could be worn with Ghagra and the fulkari on head is most important. In the heritage of Punjab, Phulkari (Dupatta) is the most significant symbol. Except this, Gidha



7(a) : Scene-1



7(b) : Scene-2

could be performed in Salwar, Kameej and Dupatta. Gidha is always performed with bare feet.

ORNAMENTS :- Not any specific ornaments are worn by Punjabi women in Gidha. Punjabi women are fond of ornaments and wear their favourite ornaments in Gidha, e.g. :

- **For Head :-** Saggi full, Shingar patti, Chowk chand, Tikka, Clip, Jhumar Sui.
- **For Hair :-** Colourful parandas, Moti/Beeds for Braids.
- **For Ear :-** Jhumke, Dandiya, Kaante, Kokru, Maame Murkiya etc.
- **For Nose :-** Teeli, Laung, Koka, Mekh, Nachli etc.



Image-8 : Dress of Gidha

Boli : Tere laung da pya lishkara,
haaliya ne hall dakk lye.

- **For Neck :-** Singh Tawiti, Janjeer, Jugni, Bugti, Ranihar, Champakali etc.
Boli : Sare tan gahne mere mapyan ne paye,
Iko tweet ohde ghar da nee,
Jdo larda tan lahde lahde karda nee.
- **For Arms :-** Bangles/Churiya, Kangan, Pariband, Gajre, Bankan, Bajuband etc.
Boli : Pariband basharmi gehna,

9(a) : Scene-1

Image- 9(b) : Scene-2 : Gidha

Iaffi paya
9(c) : Scene-3



shanak pve.

- **For Feet :-** Jhanjran and Panjeban.
Boli : Goyan peran de vich chandi dian jhanjran,
Nachan lagi ne layian pa.

All the above ornaments signifies the heritage of Punjab and are worn by Punjabi women on every occasion of joy.

GIDHA IN MODERN CONCERN :- In modern times, folk dance Gidha has identified itself on international level. The cultural traditions of Punjabi dress and language are identified through it. But now, Gidha is only restricted to stages. The aim is only to win the competitions. The form of Gidha is being transformed. The transformed form of Gidha comes to a better known form when instrumental usage seems dominating in the Gidha performed on stages.

'Lok Saj' (Folk instruments) have make its space in it, e.g. Dholki. The musical sound of *tik-tik* is formed with beating dholki with a stick. This musical sound is slowly transformed into Chimta. In the Gidha of stage, the originality and softness of dance has been destroyed and it is mere practice and then performance. So, many steps are declined and many changed its forms. Nowadays, the steps of Bhangra and Jhumar are also embedded. So, the real form of Gidha is changing. Also in the present times, the ladies that use to perform Gidha, do not have much knowledge about the cultural costumes and jewellery of Gidha, so they used to wear shimmery kind of costumes and prefer artificial jewellery. So because of this kind of presentation of Gidha in modern times, it loses its original form.

In conclusion, it could be said that either Gidha is transformed in modern times, but even then Gidha has spread the heritage, culture and history of Punjab around the world. Punjabi women are fond of their folk dance

Gidha. So, it could be said that the heritage of Punjab, Gidha is performed in every such place of world where the Punjabi people live.

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