ABSTRACT

ENACTING NEW SPATIAL CONTEXTS:
PAN INDIAN IDENTITIES OF FEMALE PERFORMERS OF SERAIKELA AND
MAYURBHANJ CHHAU

By Gouri Nilakantan Mehta

This thesis reports on the participation of women in Chhau, an all male folk theatre form of Seraikela and Mayurbhanj regions of Eastern India. This over-riding presence of women in an all male form, from the 1980s onwards, shows not only revisions in gender roles in performance arts of India, but also resistance to gender norms, which is primarily derived from an altering self-image of female performers. This thesis establishes the spatial interaction between selves of the women performers and others as creating gender fluidity in postcolonial global India.

Theoretical analyses from Indian Feminism, Postcolonialism and Globalization have been reflected on the data collected from ethnographic field methods. The thesis establishes the new emerging pan Indian identity of the women in postcolonial India and negates stereotypes and assumptions about Indian woman and social, cultural and aesthetic reality of India.
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PAN INDIAN IDENTITIES OF FEMALE PERFORMERS OF SERAIKELA AND MAYURBHANJ CHHAU

A Thesis

Submitted to the
Faculty of Miami University
In partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Masters of Arts
Department of Theater

by

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Miami University

Oxford, Ohio

2004

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Chapter One: *Chhau* Giving Indian Women New Meanings

*Chhau* is a traditional dance drama of the Sareikela and Mayurbhanj regions of Jharkhand and Orissa (Eastern India). Involving vigorous dance movements and based on mythology, it is traditionally performed by males. In its new forms since the 1980s, the performance of *Chhau* by women represents a new medium of representation in the folk theatrical genres of India. The participation of the women in *Chhau* illustrates their self-awareness and feelings of self-worth, and their public presentation to the audiences demonstrates the transformation of gender identities of Indian women in a postcolonial and globalized\(^1\) nation. These presentations and transformed identities help women negotiate with external spaces of family, community, kinship and dance troupe. This research will document women in *Chhau* performances, as manifesting the transformed identity of Indian women internally and as being aware of their personal, social value, by her negotiations with surrounding external spaces of family, community and within their dance troupe. I argue that the public performances of *Chhau* and the transformation of the identity of the women in it are demonstrations of self-consciousness in their changing identities. Conclusively, their self-image informs the processes of negotiation that occur between the internal, metaphorical space of the woman and external public spaces of her family, kinship, community and dance troupe.

The identity of an individual arises out of one’s internal self-consciousness or self-awareness. The individuals, therefore, are not only self-determined, but this strong presence locates itself in spatial metaphors, i.e. within social and cultural frameworks of a society. Therefore, the identity of women in postcolonial India arises, as a manifestation of their self-

\(^1\) I argue that postcolonialism is a cultural construct, “it refers to a typical configuration which is always in the process of change, never consistent with itself” (Misra and Hodge 289). Postcolonialism is a thus cultural construct. I also define globalization as the “intensification of worldwide social relations which link distinct localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa” (Giddens 181).
worth that is intrinsically located within the social and cultural framework of India. The social and cultural presence of postcolonial Indian nation is further placed within a global situation, which adds a distinct uniqueness to the identity of the individuals in the Indian nation. A "new Indian woman" emerges in postcolonial India, and by having her own self-determining presence, she adds to the distinct cultural, political and social framework of India. With this strong self-determining presence of the women in postcolonial global India, they become agents bringing change and creating revisions in gender roles, causing a "cultural radicalism" for the Indian nation.

Manu Chakraborthy, an Indian feminist argues,

The power of 'aesthetic resistance', to subvert, to demolish dominant cultural frames, is far greater than the power of 'politics of resistance', the tremendous psychological strength that it generates is unbelievable-something, that is so essential to the 'being' of women. (Chakraborthy 96)

I argue that this "aesthetic resistance" by Indian women in performing arts is a clear indication to presence of the "being" of the women. My contentions are individual beings are placed within these aesthetic forms. The self-consciousness of the Indian women in the performing arts is important, and this awareness works within the external complex spatial contexts (their troupes family, kinship, community) that often are the foundations for the performing art forms. My thesis will demonstrate the process through which this self-awareness of women in performing arts is created, and the methods by which this self-awareness is maintained to create a new identity for women in postcolonial India.

The human subject is contingent upon social life. What I mean here is that the metaphysical space of an individual is created by the interactions of an individual body's self-
space with external social spaces (family, kinship, community). The interactions between the
metaphysical space and the external spaces create social transformations and social change.
Therefore, these internal and external spatial connections of an individual provide valuable
opportunities for agency and social change. According to Keith and Pile,

Spatiality should simultaneously express people's experiences of, for
example, displacement (a feeling of being out of place), dislocation
(relating to alienation) and fragmentation (the jarring multiple identities).
Spatialities represent both spaces between multiple identities and the
contradiction within these identities. (Keith and Pile 225)

Therefore, one cannot recognize any "pure" context for identity formation of an
individual, as it is connected to multiple, external and internal spatial contexts. In order to
explain displacement, dislocation, and fragmentation of any individual or group (gender, class or
race), one has to look at the various ways in which the internal space of an individual connects to
the multiple external spatial contexts creating an "impure" subject. A Foucauldain insight and
model of productive power (power working in complex ways) can explain the formation of an
"impure subject". For instance, we can examine gender relations and the power relationships
between them using this insight. The model therefore, can, explain how gender has been re-
conceptualized in India and how the questions of agency operate in creating a new social,
political, cultural, and aesthetic fabric of India.

Foucault remarks, “power works by producing impure subjects, they are always also the
elements of its articulation “(History of Sexuality 93-94). Therefore, the roles of women as
agents are "impure", work in complex ways, and arise in multiple spatial connections.
According to Irene Gedelof,
Women's multiplicity can be referred back, not only to morphology of the female body, but also/rather to the ways in which the female, the feminine 'woman' and 'women' circulate across and between the discourses, practices and institutions that produce gender, race, nation and community. (Gedelof 93)

The identity of the woman in India therefore should not be located within the morphology of the body. The altering of self-consciousness or self-awareness of a woman, the imaginary, or the metaphysical space, connected to external spatial contexts should be recognized. I argue that this metaphysical space or self-awareness of an Indian woman arises due to several factors, which can be identified as the self-awareness of individuals (men or women), their resistance to patriarchy, feminist movements in India, and the participation of individual women in the political life and legislative laws, and postcolonial conditions of India within a global context.

The social structure of the society, therefore, furthers the self-awareness or the imaginary self of an individual. Neil Smith, a human geographer remarks, "the primary physical site of personal identity, the scale of the body is socially constructed" (Smith 102). Gender, therefore, is also not fixed or a stable entity in India, but rather fluid and provisional. According to Foucault, "Resistance appears in mobile and transitory forms of temporary unities and regroupings, in which even individuals' relationships to their bodies and identities are in a process of flux" (History of Sexuality 96).

Resistance to power within the normally prescribed gender roles takes on various levels of meanings; it can cause regroupings and temporary unities, or change in identities of one gender. I want to argue that, since identities of gender are in a state of flux and since they are
created by the interactions of individuals with larger spatial contexts, they are placed within social constructions between the self and their families, communities, religions and kin groups.

Resistance to any one group or gender is maintained or revised through various methods and processes. As recognized by Foucault, gender-identity and resistance to it is maintained through discourses and everyday actions. According to Foucault,

Power comes from below: there is no binary and all encompassing opposition between rulers and the ruled at the root of power relations and serving as a general matrix-no such duality extending from top- down and reacting more and more limited groups to the very depths of the social body. (History of Sexuality 94)

The resistance of women to their patriarchal structures should therefore be seen through definitions of power and autonomy that go beyond such “top-down dualities”. What I mean is that the expressions of the agency among the woman in India go beyond simple binaries of "top-down". Instead, “we must discover voices that range from mildly defiant to the eloquently challenging” (Kumar 20). During the course of my thesis, I will demonstrate these voices as verbal and non-verbal processes of negotiation, coercion and tact between the Indian women and the patriarchal structures. These negotiations induce transformations in gender roles. The Indian woman, through these processes and through constant dialogues and actions, negotiates with the social construct to mold it to her own advantage. These negotiations result in the emergence of a "new" identity for an Indian woman in a postcolonial global Indian nation, forming a pan- Indian identity, that is "new" while at the same time she maintains both "surface modernity and deep tradition" (Rajan 130).
To demonstrate this process of the creation of the pan-Indian identity, my thesis will look at the women performers of Chhau. The thesis is divided into five chapters; the first chapter introduces Chhau and surveys the identity of women in postcolonial India, with special references Indian feminism. The self-worth, internal consciousness or metaphorical space of women as performers in Chhau is established in the second chapter. The third chapter examines the interactions between this self-consciousness of the individual women and the methods of interactions between the metaphorical space of the artists and their external social spaces (family and other dance troupe members, males and females). After establishing the methods through which power revisions occur among the women and her family and troupe, chapter four describes the postcolonial and global context of Chhau performances and establishes these connections as providing a new identity for the Indian women that is local in phenomenon but national and global in perspective. Chapter 5 draws on the conclusion to my thesis and describes the roles of insiders in research.

I drew on this theoretical framework while conducting my field research in Seraikela and Mayurbhanj of Eastern India, which will be discussed in the next section. As I am an indigenous researcher, a native of India, my methodologies tend to approach cultural values and behaviors of India, which are integral to my research and are discussed in the subsequent chapters.

**Description of research methodology**

My own career in performance is of a native actor of India with training in indigenous folk derived and western style theatre, but one who is untrained in Chhau. Keeping certain theoretical paradigms in mind, this research was conducted from May - July 2003, in libraries and archives in India at the Institute of Ethnomusicology, and Sangeet Natak Library (Library of
Dance and Drama), Delhi, and the Tribal Institute of Folk Studies at Jamshedpur. Library research included archival studies on the significance and relevance of folk forms of India, with special reference to Chhau, and the reviews of performances in newspapers, government brochures and magazines concerning both males and females of Chhau.

The research methodology primarily employed ethnographic methods, involving video recordings, taped interviews, and field observation and data collection at Seraikela (Jharkhand) and Mayurbhanj (Orissa). Even though Chhau is performed in other regions, namely Purulia and Dhenekal, I chose to concentrate primarily on these two regions as they have maximum numbers of female performers. I extended this field research to Delhi, the capital of India, to have access to a larger contextual framework. The subjects chosen are primarily students of institutions teaching Chhau (Government Chhau Dance Center) and some professional artists who are residents of Baripada and Delhi.

The ethnographic field research supplemented the library research in two main phases. The initial ethnographic portion of the research was largely documentary, and the regions of Seraikela and Mayurbhanj in Eastern India were chosen as the primary ones. As the research is concerned with human meanings and interactions observable in everyday situations, participant observations were the main methodology for my field research. Theory on Feminism, Postcolonialism and Globalization from the library research provides the concepts and interpretations for this thesis.

The fieldwork involved both focused observations, video recording, still photography, interviews with performers, stage managers, troupe leaders and patrons. I also chose unfocussed

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2 Map given in the appendix

3 According to Jorgenson, "through participant observation, it is possible to describe what goes on, who and what is involved, when and where things happen, how they occur, and why- at least from the standpoint of participants" (Jorgenson 12).
observation by looking for general information about the artists of *Chhau*. I questioned the respondents on their age, education, social status, and marriage and career choices⁴. I paid attention to language and regional characteristics i.e. economic development, social stratification and the political situation, and I also observed artisans and costume makers of *Chhau* in progress.

I am conscious of my role as a relative "insider" to this research and hence I have addressed some issues on ethics. This Feminist research makes this "insider" methodology acceptable; however, certain key points have to be kept in mind. Talking about the insider model, Linda Tuhiwai Smith argues,

> The critical issue with insider research is the need for constant reflexivity.
> At a general level, insider researchers have to have ways of thinking critically about their processes, their relationships and the richness of their data and analysis. So do the outsiders, but the major difference is that the insiders have to live with the consequences of their processes on a day to day basis for ever more, and so do their families and their communities. (Smith 137)

The complexities of an insider research hence had its own norms and one of them is that of ethics and respect. Linda Tuhiwai Smith points out,

> As non- indigenous experts have claimed considerable acceptability amongst their own colleagues and peers, government officials and society on the basis of their research, indigenous voices have been silenced or 'Othered' in the process. (Smith 139) respondents have been kept anonymous (on their request), while I have kept a professional and critical outlook. I also was

⁴ Detailed questions given in the appendix including the biographies of the respondents
acutely aware of my dual role as being a relative insider, as I happen to be married into that region and of an outsider being a part of the western academia. My dual role will be discussed in detail in the last concluding section of this thesis.

The presence of women in Chhau is of pivotal importance to any individual who is a performer or a researcher. It establishes the "true" emerging identity of Indian women and attacks stereotypes. It establishes the other new dimension to the gender identity in India not only in performance but also in the social, political and cultural life of India. Before establishing this new identity of women as performers, let us discuss the specific elements of Chhau.

**Chhau: A Folk Performance of Eastern India**

Indian theatrical tradition goes back to antiquity and is deeply rooted in tradition and culture. Therefore, it has its own uniqueness and structure that is truly eastern in its orientation. This can be seen in its style, costumes, masks, and choice of gender roles in performance, both as participants and spectators. The theatrical traditions of India are divided into the *Loka dharmi* (the popular), the folk, which includes *Nautanki* and *Swang* and the *Natyadharmi* (the traditional), the classical, based on ancient texts on drama, like the *Bharatanatyam* (a classical tradition of South). Several characteristics delineate the classical and the folk. The classical performances of India based on set codified laws, such as those of the *Natyasatra*, do not maintain the strictness of classical and is “open” to interpretation. The *Natyasastra* (800 A.D.) is an ancient Indian treatise on drama, written in Sanskrit that is the foundation for most theatrical forms of India. Some forms can be termed as "semi-classical" and Chhau a fine example of it, since it keeps the basic elements of acting styles, costumes, instructions for directors, stage craft
and design and plot structure as based on the Natyasastra, and yet it does not follow the same "strictness" and "purity" of the classical form.

Chhau involves basic martial art techniques and is performed traditionally by males belonging to the three contiguous States of Jharkhand (Seraikela), Orissa (Baripada) and West Bengal (Purulia). While these three forms have the same basic stances, modes of expression and basic expressive symbols, there are some basic differences between the three forms. Chhau of Seraikella utilizes masks of soft tonal qualities almost looking graceful. The soft masks give it grace and a “feminine” quality. At the same time, since these masks make facial gestures impossible, it therefore involves elaborate footwork. The Mayurbanj Chhau on the other hand, does not use masks at all and lays more emphasis on facial expressions. The Chhau dance at Purulia does not have many female characters, since its themes are from episodes of the epics of Mahabharata that do not have such characters. Women as performers have not yet been introduced to Chhau at Purulia, while Chhau at Seraikela and Mayurbhanj have an array of female characters and women as participants.

The dramatic form of Chhau parallels the Kathakali, another all male martial art dance drama of southern India. Since the techniques that are involved are based on martial art techniques, men have traditionally performed both these forms. These forms are semi classical and do not have any set codification. Chhau has elaborate masks but Kathakali has elaborate face make up that resemble masks.

The techniques of Chhau are based on basic principles of the Natya Sastra, the basic steps involve imitation of nature: the walk of a cow, stalking of a crane, fish jumping out of water, household duties performed by females like mixing of cow dung, grinding of spices,

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5 The details on Chhau discussed in this section have been drawn from my field research and interviews from my respondents.
fetching water from the pond etc. These movements, the *Uflis* (the basic stances), and the *Chauk* (elaborate footwork) are synchronized to form the pieces or the *Topkas*. The basic plots of the dramatic form are taken from Hindu mythology, religion and history for example *Chandrabhaga* (depicting love of the moon), *Ratri* (a love story between the moon and night) and *Meghdoot* (based on a popular Sanskrit play written by the playwright *Kalidasa*).

Most popular theaters, like *Ramlila* and *Raslila* of rural north India have deep ritualistic and mythological foundations that are performed during major festivals. Like other religions these nativity plays depict the birth of gods and dramatize stories about them. *Chhau* is associated with a major ritual festival of Eastern India, the *Chaitra Parva* (spring festival), held in the month of *Chaitra* or April. It does not have a religious base however involves the use of themes from mythology and history and is performed in the evenings to entertain the people of the regions of Sareikela and Mayurbanj. The *parva* has rituals that honor the Hindu god Shiva, the lord of destruction, of the Hindu pantheon. The festival is held over thirteen days involving the *Chhau* performances in the evenings of the days of the rituals, barring some specific days and thirteen men of some specific communities or the *Bhaktas*, the devotees, perform these rituals.

Some folk theatre forms of India like the *Lavani* and the *Tamasha* of Western India are purely for the entertainment of the people. These use sex and strong sexual innuendos as a theme that makes it immensely popular. Since, these performances are held in the night and employ the use of secular songs and dances, the women performers are not given high social value and esteem, and many women are discouraged to participate as performers. Many of the performers also come from traditional low classes.

Traditionally, *Chhau* also had placed restrictions on women as performers. The origins of *Chhau* can best describe the lack of any female participants in the early years and their denial as
performers. The dance drama is said to have evolved from local martial art dances (Parikhanda Khela) involving swordplay in the princely states of these Eastern regions around the eighteenth and ninetieth century. The warriors of the royal princely houses of Singhbhum and Manbhum dynasties (eighteenth century to early twentieth century) employed the techniques of the martial arts or Parikhanda khela, and used them to dramatize narratives. These dramatized narratives became the genesis for Chhau, and since this form involved these martial art techniques, it was taken to be a masculine form, and hence women were denied participatory privileges. The word Chhau has its origins in Chauni (military camp) and Chhaya (Shadow or mask). The colloquial meaning of the word Chhau is dexterity, skill and technique, hence this form needed "skill" which was based on martial art, which was privileged only to the men.

The royal princes of the Manbhum and the Singhbhum dynasties remained the major patrons of this form before Independence. They were not only instrumental in keeping the tradition alive by active support by funding the form, but also by being participants as performers. They often supported this art by giving generous donations and encouraged competitions among the individual performers or troupes. The kings of the Singhbhum region (Baripada) organized the performers into two main competitive groups, the Dakshin Sahi, southern part and the Uttar Sahi, the northern part named after the regions of the town of Baripada and yearly competitions was held between them.

The folk form of Chhau has its own characteristics of costume, music and dance and has wide appeal in the areas of Seraikela and Mayurbhanj. This appeal and popularity has also been hastened by the introduction of female performers and its entry into other popular mediums like films. This introduction of females in Chhau is indicative of transformed gender identity of Indian women as performers in the arts. The participation of the females in Chhau is indicative
of a new self worth, their own personal signification, and the public presentation of transformed gender identity for an Indian woman. It therefore becomes important to study the process of this participation, which will be discussed in the following chapters.

The Chhau female artists are reshaping their history by their participation in the performance. This participation is entrenched in the social life and spatial imagination of the artist. The metaphorical space, of self-worth of the artist, helps the process of negotiation between the artist and her external spaces, her home, troupe members and community to occur. The identity of this women performer will be established by analyzing the national identity of Indian women, and then by establishing the specifics contexts of the regions of Seraikela and Mayurbanj that determine this national identity.

**National Identity of Women in India: Special References to Indian Feminism**

Indian feminism has to be seen in the movements arising in independence after the British colonial rule in 1947. The first half of the twentieth century (1930s to 1947) under the colonial rule had a great significance in shaping the category of women in India. Women's status and their participation in the pro-independence struggle became key issues shaping the politics of the anti-colonialist period (Gedelof 29). Outstanding women leaders like Aruna Asaf Ali and Sarojini Naidu took part in the political agitations during the 1940s that gave women of India equal status along with their male counterparts. According to Samita Sen,

From the 1920s, the Indian National Congress began to forge linkages with peasants, workers and women’s organizations in order to demonstrate that it had mass support…some women were already engaged in a variety of political activities. Their participation was often
'token' and symbolic, but the women were educated and politically knowledgeable and they were seeking (or being given) very new public roles. (Sen 475)

This political participation of the Indian women continued after its Independence. From 1950s onwards, and with the advent of Indira Gandhi in the late 1960s, Indian feminism reached a high mark. In the 1960s and 70s, the ideologies of socialism had great bearings on the political status of Indian women as it reinforced equality. The election of Indira Gandhi as the prime minister in 1971 gave women opportunities for political rights and equality. The Indian constitution was amended in 1996, and 33 % of seats in legislature, education and parliament were reserved for women. This meant that women had an access to higher education as well as to government administrative capacities, which gave women the power and authority to reinforce laws that improved the status of women.

Despite such mandatory measures by the Indian government towards women and the wave of political feminism from the 1950s to 1970s, the social status of Indian women continued to be neglected. Traditional patriarchal models and societal norms such as female infanticide, dowry practices and bride burning haunted the status of Indian females. Many of the feminists' movements of the 1970s and 80s struggled to fight against such social evils that negated the position and authority of Indian woman. Sen argues, "The turning point (in Indian feminism) came in the 1970s. Several conjectural events some within and some outside India, gave a radical turn to the women's movement. ‘New Feminism’ in the developed countries of the West led to the International Year and then the Decade of Women in 1971.” (Sen 482).

The Indian feminist movement during the late 1980s and 1990s also had constantly to challenge communalism, and feminists worked to lessen the tensions caused by Muslim and
Hindu religious biases. Besides fighting these large-scale communal prejudices, the Indian woman of the 1990s was placed in emerging versions of a post-colonial Indian nation. While the Indian woman of the 1990s was recognized as an equal partner in political and economic life, she had to struggle constantly to balance her household duties and career growth. This economic independence sometimes proves to be double burden for the Indian woman, as she has constantly to fulfill both roles, as an economic collaborator to her husband and had the essential role as the homemaker.

While these "double duties" continue to burden the Indian female in 2000s, her identity is in a rapid change due to intensive globalization and emerging contexts of a post-colonial nation. The Indian female of the 21st century is now placed in a global context with her traditional roles changing at a rapid pace. The female performers of Seriakela have to be seen in this emerging global post-colonial state. Rural/urban divisions of the 1990s are no longer rigid as this post-colonial, global context is dismantling traditional family structures at a fast and rapid pace. Rapid globalization, consumer economy and capitalism are dismantling extended families in the Seraikela and Mayurbhanj regions and the notions of cooperative shared economy within the family with its kinship support. Therefore, the Indian female now faces a new emerging context in the preservation of her traditional roles along with rapid destabilization of extended families and kinship support. The historical context for an Indian woman in the 2000s has clearly made a transition. However, the Indian women continue to be considered as the preservers of cultural norms, tradition and values.

Hence, Indian women have to be considered within the complex intersections of sex, gender, family, community, religion and nation that define the individual self of the female. Indian Feminists recognize that Indian women are positioned in complex ways. Kunkum
Sangari argues that 'notions of femaleness, self or identity' are so tied up with the questions of family, class, religion and other forms of collectivity that they cannot be seen in terms of a 'single unified axis' (871).

Some Indian feminists like Kamala Ganesh and Uma Charavarthi, place the concepts of the mother goddess in Hinduism, and the metaphysical and mythological groundings of Hindu culture, as tending to privilege feminine voices. Kamala Ganesh looks at the wide varieties of powerful female goddesses in Hinduism and argues that the female body as a goddess can be a “persistent disturbing presence” (Ganesh 65) as the Hinduism places emphasis on the destructive and creative power of the female goddesses. Ania Loomba goes further from this contention and focuses on how these "manifestations of the mother goddess, binds together the dualities of “life and death, nurturing and destruction in the female body” (Ganesh, 63), which provides an important context for nationalist interests. She argues,

For the Indian woman to be cast as Mother India and to serve a wide spectrum of political interests in colonial times, she had to be rewritten as more- than-victims. As an agent of Hindu tradition, or nationalist interests, a certain amount of violation and even desire had to be attributed to her. (Loomba 216)

The nationalist opposition to the British colonial rule during the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century cannot be ignored and the new versions of the Indian woman have to be seen in the emerging postcolonial Indian nation. Tanika Sarkar argues about this extension of roles of women from private spaces into political agitation against the colonial domination, as causing the recording of gender relations between male and female in the public world. According to her the,
Extended domestic, feminine ritual into the world of men and public affairs (of the women caused)… a mingling of male and female spaces and practices. The sharing mingling opened up possibilities for the reordering of gender relations. (Sarkar 2014)

The extension and participation of women in nationalist movements, helped to decolonize the colonial domination, as they challenged the “paternalistic” attitude towards Indian women. The new Indian national identity for women described as “Mother India (Bharat Mata)” helped to create a new context for colonized India.

Casting Indian women as "Mother India" or emphasizing women as carriers of continuity and tradition can help us to engage in new readings about the identity of women in post-colonial India. Some feminists like Susie Tharu and Tejaswini Niranjana reject this model of “Mother India”, and they claim the “foregrounding of women in political projects that reinforce gendered, and reclaimed, class and caste hierarchies’ represents an indictment of feminism itself” (96). They argue that one needs to capture the ways in which the apparently stable category of "women", which covers caste, class and community differences. They emphasize the individual self-identity of women helps to change and reverse power structures in gender roles.

While some of the arguments of Tharu and Niranjana maybe valid, especially if one looks at individual female selves, we cannot ignore the complexities of Indian tradition having its distinctive structures of family, class, caste, community and religion. Rajeshwari Sundar Rajan argues that the construct of the new Indian woman should be in the appearance of the individual women's achievement that comfortably fit with a tradition preserved in the family, kinship, community and religion of India. The Indian woman preserves family, kinship norms of
conjugality and traditional and religious values of being the essentially preserver. At the same time, she keeps her individuality alive.

Most Indian feminists therefore recognize the sense of collective identity. Seemanthini Niranjana suggests that the concept of the individual self is fundamentally a Western imposition, at odds with the Indian metaphysical preferences for a relational model of agency and subjectivity (32). The Indian women should thus, be seen in relationships between the individual selves and the collective identities of females. The interactions between the selves of the females within their homes, communities and kinship and within multiple layers of caste, class and religion working along regional and national lines should be recognized. These complexities and multiple layers of Indian society define the new construct of Indian Woman as emerging in the twenty-first century and having the will to revise gender roles in tradition.

The role of the women in Chhau, therefore, has to be seen as “collective subjects” where the individual self of a female artist works within specific contexts that are particular to her region and nation. The next sections will identity these specific regional contexts particular to the regions of Seraikela and Mayurbhanj.

**Regional Identities of Indian Women with Special References to Chhau Female Performers**

The female performers of Chhau are the transmitters of cultural tradition and value, both as performers and as an integral part of their households as wives, daughters or daughter in laws. The identities Chhau female artists of this Eastern region are similar to any other woman of any other region, south, north or west of India or belonging larger cosmopolitan towns or cities. This can be seen in the paternal structures of families, community norms of inclusion and exclusion of outsiders, social ills prevalent in India like dowry, and the traditional norms of marriage and
worship. Regional variations, however, do affect the nature of the families, extended or nuclear, kinship, and class and caste demarcations. In this section, we will be determining the regional identities of women in India with special references to the *Chhau* female artists. We will also be looking at broad intersections of family structures, marriage, community and religion that determine the larger national context for the identity of an Indian woman.

Religious affiliations are often the base of many households in India this affiliation often determines the societal norms of gender, family, community, kinship and class. Despite the varied religious practices in India, namely Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, and Sikhism, societal models of family, family structure, marriage, kinship, and the religions have some shared characteristics. Extended family norms, community and kinship interactions between its members, gender roles, and preservation of traditional values are common to most Indians. As Kunkum Sangari points out it is necessary to work with a concept of “multiple identities" that emerge in religion "through several crises -crossing ideologies rather than a single one", and that they “exist, not as atomized entities, but in close relation with each other" (871). *Chhau* is a secular dramatic form and many of the performers are not Hindus alone. The women in *Chhau* therefore share common family structures, and are seen as the essential preserver of community and religious values. However, for the purpose of my research, I shall be only looking at Hindu female performers of *Chhau* with a few exceptions.6

The Indian female is the preserver of a community and tradition, the “identity of the community is constructed on the body of the woman" (Kannabhiran and Kannabiran 2). The Indian tradition placing emphasis on family codes, kinship and community, norms women's behaviors i.e. her economic decisions, her choice of marriage, her relationship to her family

6 The intentions of this research were not to seek out Hindus alone but the Hindu Oriya speaking women largely practice *Chhau* in the regions of Seraikela and Mayurbhanj.
members, are within the identities of women. Hence, the identity of the community is on the body of the woman that sometimes is a part of her physical being. For example, women wear certain identity markers like the burqua, the vermilion dot or the bindi on the forehead, toe rings if they are married etc.

Sangari and Vaid point out “the redescription of an Indian woman cannot be framed in a single unified axis but rather as multiple identities of family, female, class and religion” (871). Despite rapid globalization and loosening of regional and rural urban divisions of India, and emergence of translocal\textsuperscript{7} identities, the women in Seraikela and Mayurbhanj are placed in specific regional contexts. Regional divisions in India are based on linguistic lines. Oriya is the regional language spoken in both Seraikela and Mayurbhanj and therefore, I interviewed mostly the Oriya speaking women. As language determines the regions, there are specific norms for family structures, inter personal relationships between the members of the family, education and sexuality.

The family's structures of the region are based on the extended family notions, one in which the sons bring in the wives to their household. Nuclear families found in larger urban cities are not the normative practice and hence many of the societal rules followed in this region are different from other regions. Child rearing is the primary responsibility of an Indian woman. She is placed within the realms of the household and within private spaces of the home. A rather simplistic division of public/ spaces thus seems to emerge. However, this private space is often dependent on the complex context of the household to which the woman belongs. For example, the relationship of the female within her household and towards her family members, i.e. her parents, in- laws, husband and children can create different power dynamics between the various members. The power position of the female in India can therefore be negated or enhanced by the

\textsuperscript{7} Kirin Kapadia defines this as the "space between the urban and rural" (158)
role that she plays as a daughter, wife, daughter in law or an sister and is highly dependent on the context of her household. Sudhir Kakar correctly describes the “matrix” of identity of an Indian woman as dependent on others,

…Her identity as a Hindu woman has evolved out of the particulars of her lifecycle and childhood, out of the dailiness of her relationships as a daughter in her husband's family, and out of the universals of the traditional ideals of womanhood absorbed by her from childhood onwards. (Kakar 56)

The identity of a Hindu woman is in the relationships that she maintains in her husband’s family. Her daily household duties are demarcated. For example she is often the earliest to rise and ensure that the household meals are cooked and she also has to tend the ailing members of her family and look after the younger members.

Since most Indians belong to an extended family, one in which the sons bring their wives into the parental household, it stipulates a common residence and sometimes forges common economic and social activities. The extended family set up in India sometimes helps to strengthen economic and social activities, as each member of the family is viewed as an integral part to increase economic activity. Thus, the participation of the females in Chhau as performers is often the byproduct of interactions between the performer and her family members. For example, the career decision of the females to perform in Chhau often arises within the settings of her family, where her being as an economic collaborator, a part of the family can be valued. According to Nita Desai, “the family is the setting is in which, "kin solidarity is forged; socialization processes are initiated, and economic collaboration valued" (107).
The identity of the Indian female is further influenced by the patriarchal - normative structure of the family, where the eldest male member is considered the head of the family. The role and responsibility of each of the family members are legitimized by tradition and given social sanction through it. The household therefore is the pivotal place where relationships are defined between the family members, which forms the matrix for the identity for the females. The extended family being patriarchal in its orientation need not be women centered. However, this kind of family system does not entail negligence on the women in the family. Kakar, correctly points out,

Although by no means does it (the family) always resound with solidarity and good will, the existence of this exclusive sphere of femininity and domesticity gives women a tangible opportunity to be productive and lively, to experience autonomy and to exercise power. (Kakar 61)

The extended family defines the position of the woman, despite the patriarchal orientations of the family, the position of the woman can be enhanced, and she can have just more than a formal role. As Roy points out,

An understanding that the concern with constructing and reconstructing women stems from a variety of agendas which are not necessarily women-centered, as a result of which women's identities are constituted through processes that are complex and no means bounded within the framework of a single logic. (Roy 10)

Despite the Indian tradition that gives formal authority to the senior male members in the extended family, the women in such families can have a vital and pivotal role in decisions that
are taken within her family. Indian women have considerable power in the private sphere and the inner realms of the home and the household. As Kakar observes,

Although the wife of the family pays little deference to her husband, especially in front of strangers, she may exercise considerable domestic power, not merely among the other women of the household, but with her husband, and she often makes many of the vital decisions affecting her family's interests.

(Kakar 118)

The extended family set up often becomes the determine factor for the choice of most Indian marriages. While individual choices in weddings are being more respected, the traditional structure for weddings is arranged between the parents of respective boys and girls. Marriage is thus seen as a close bond between two families and within the same community and caste. Women in these regions do not show freedom in expressing their sexuality openly and public display of affection often draws hostility from community members. The role of the woman in such “arranged marriages” is within the extended family structure, as a daughter in law or a mother. Her individuality can be relegated to being inconspicuous. Custom, traditions and the interests of the extended family, demand the realignment of roles and relationships. Initiated by marriage, the roles of the husband and wife, at least in the beginning, are relegated to inconsequence and inconspicuousness (Kakar, 74). The husband and wife do not show any open affection in front of their family members and their relationships are defined by their duties to their extended family.

Community, kinship and religion can play a more important role in "women's lives than gender” in India (Dietrich 44). The interactions of the female participants in Chhau are within
these Hindu normative models of society, home and kinship, and are important carriers of traditional value. Dietrich argues,

As women are crucial in the organization of the home and the socialization of the children, cultural control over them is fundamental to the continuity, not only of the race, but of tradition and communal identity itself. (Dietrich 44)

Tradition being in a constant state of flux “contemporary women's self definition is being reproduced is invented tradition” (Chakravarthi 57). Indian women thus, do not simply transmit a self-evident already-constituted body of tradition. The female performers of Chhau seek to transmit the cultural norms and traditional patterns of their society both as performers but also as wives, daughters or daughters in law of a patriarchal family structure.

The identity of these Indian women should not be seen as conflictive to traditions but rather as a “symbols of historical continuity” (Rajan, 135). As Rajeshwari Sundar Rajan argues, many aspects of tradition that can be sites of oppression for the female can become the sites for “remaking female identity” (Rajan 132). The female performer of Chhau therefore is remaking her female identity in this site of an exclusive all male art form, while maintaining her identity in her home and community. The “new construct” of the woman in Chhau should be seen as one in which her choice as a performer is preserved in a conjugal domestic sphere.

The female performer of Chhau is able to resolve, “the conflicts between the rational criteria of specific tasks and institutional goals" with her own deeply held belief (however ambivalent) in the importance of honoring family and Jati (kinship) bonds (Kakar 125). At one end of the balance, the Chhau artist is a mother, wife, daughter and daughter in law, a part of her
extended family and community, and at the other end she is a strong individual with her self will to perform in an all male form.

No single symbolic system can work for explaining the mechanics of the balance that she maintains. As Gayatri Spivak points out, these mechanics should be seen within "transparencies" of relationships that exist between the female artist and family and community. The negation and assertion of a female should be seen in the refusal of “sign systems” (Spivak 73) in Chhau, and the negation of societal norms on gender and assertion of self worth of the female performer. The Female performer of Chhau uses actions that involve a wide spectrum of protest from “Daily Private acts” (Spivak, 75) to violent oppositional deeds. The actions of tact, coercion, restraint and prudence allows the women Chhau artists to negotiate with her traditional norms of family, marriage and gender roles, she therefore emerges as the new Indian woman, perennially and transcendentally a wife, mother, and home make, whose role is to balance (deep) tradition and surface modernity (Sundar Rajan 133). A "Pan Indian identity" (Rajan 129) for an Indian woman emerges that is able to reconcile the conflicts in her tradition and negotiate with it and uses modernity to define a new place for her.

I argue that the emergence of the pan Indian identity women in Chhau draws upon “translocal modernities (Kapadia, 143). I recognize the space between national and local geographies, the translocal experiences helps to link specific localities (local) identities to an overreaching level (national) pan Indian one. What I mean here is that the identity and the agency of woman performers in Chhau, in the Seraikela and Mayurbhanj region transcend the local and the regional experiences to the national level, thus, creating this new emerging pan Indian identity for women in India.
Through the introduction of women as performers, we are witnessing a transformation not only in Chhau as a dramatic performance but also within the culture within the regional contexts of Seraikela and Mayurbhanj. Appadurai notes these transformations as modernity, different from the Western social science, he views them as being, “reincarnated as the break between tradition and modernity and typologized as the difference between ostensibly traditional and modern societies” thus, this “has been shown to distort the meanings of change and the politics of pastness” (Appadurai 3).

Modernity is an “unevenly experienced” (Appadurai 3), what I mean here is that set regional transformations are happening in the translocal regions of Seraikela and Mayurbhanj with the introduction of women. This can be seen within the breaking of the extended family and creation of nuclear families in the region, emergence of education and encouragement of both men and women to study further, destabilization of normative patterns in arranged marriages and transformation in the caste system. These local transformations in Chhau are therefore, causing modernity in the society of Seriakela and Mayurbhanj that is creating a new consciousness for women of the region. According to Kirin Kapadia, the consciousness, or the imaginary is therefore, “local in its attachment to the meanings from its past” that create a “local modernity” (Kapadia 152). According to Kapadia,

Thus, certain forms of modernity, through appearing to be continuation of tradition, actually embody a new imaginary and a new identity. From this perspective, the complex social phenomena that are categorically condemned by social scientists as the evidence of a deplorable acceleration in gender discrimination against women, reveal themselves to be something else as well. (Kapadia 153)
These translocal transformations in Chhau goes beyond regional experiences and this new emancipation of women is closely linked up to the “positive constructions of consumerism” (Kapadia154). Rajeshwari Sundar Rajan recognizes the effects of mass media, newspapers and public information creating the modernization of the Indian woman. According to her, “the ‘modernization’ of the Indian woman can then be valorized as painless, non-conflictual, even harmonious process, in contrast to the discomforts produced by political feminisms. (Rajan 131). Kapadia argues that large-scale migration of classes, economic emancipation, political freedom and the influence of mass media help create the pan Indian identity for the woman in India.

Tradition and modernization therefore goes together that creates the specific translocal consciousness for women in Seraikela and Mayrurbhanj further creating a pan Indian Indian identity influenced by modernization and consumerism. Therefore, I recognize translocal identities of women as created by the process of tact and negotiation between the women and her family, troupe within region specifics and the pan Indian identity as the national identity of the female performer that goes beyond translocal experiences, one in where the Indian women maintains the balance between modernity and tradition.

The participation of women in Chhau as performers in the 2000s conclusively should be seen as marking a new benchmark for Indian feminism. This is a part of the larger postcolonial and global Indian context creating a new image for the women. The internal self-awareness or the self-identity of the women is the foundation for the emergence of this “new” identity. The women in postcolonial India are displaying this self-awareness and self-consciousness by their participation in Chhau being an all male form. The second chapter will establish this self-consciousness and self-awareness of the women in Chhau that follows in the next section.
Chapter Two

Metaphorical Spaces and Self-Awareness of a Woman Performer in Chhau

Karl Marx in his book 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte recognizes that people make their own histories within constraining/enabling spatial contexts, and these develop locales or settings that foster interactions between individual selves and others, and help to change or create new histories. The human body, therefore, becomes the site of identity formation that results out of such interactions between selves and others. This individual identity is further defined its particular gender that can create changes in the identity formation of a person. This identity formation of any one-gender, the self- identity or self- awareness of any one individual that is created, helps to shape and reestablish boundaries between groups or individuals. For the purpose of this chapter, I wish to show how interest in ones' personal and social identity i.e. being women, help the processes shaping human experience by establishing the individual's boundaries of one's self- consciousness and self- interest (or metaphorical space) and revising the boundaries between men and women.

This chapter will establish the self -awareness of the women in Chhau as creating the agency for change in gender roles to occur in performances. By looking at self-awareness and self-consciousness of the female performers of Chhau in the Mayurbanj and Sareikela regions of eastern India, I will demonstrate how power relations in gender have been changed in this folk performance of India. I will demonstrate how the overriding individual consciousness of a female participant, or interest in personal and social identity, contest the relations of normality and marginality in gender roles in performances of Chhau. During the course of this chapter, I
will establish the formation of self-awareness of the women participants in *Chhau* and determine these as being the main factors that help to revise gender roles in *Chhau*.

Foucault, a theorist and philosopher, realizes that the shift from individual consciousness to wider reaching “relations of power” is enhanced by spatial metaphors. Foucault believes that the power of knowledge (the knowledge of individual consciousness) leads the agency of change and power revisions in gender to operate. According to him, the internal knowledge or the acknowledgements of individual self-worth and self-merit become the determining factors that disseminate the effects of power. According to him,

> Once the knowledge can be analyzed in terms of region, domain, implantation, displacement, and transposition one is able to capture the process by which knowledge functions as a form of power and disseminates the effects of power. *(History of Sexuality 69)*

Therefore, it is the knowledge of the internal self-worth or the metaphorical space of women in *Chhau*, their self-valuation, as females and performers, which become the primary motivations leading for the agency to change gender roles. The internal self-worth of a woman as a performer of *Chhau* motivates her to participate in an all male form. The internal self-worth or consciousness creates the self-desire to be performers, to serve her interests to be equal participant of an all male folk form. These individual motivations and internal desires provide agency in the revisions of power relations in performance roles among men and women in *Chhau*. The self-knowledge or the internal metaphorical space therefore fosters the spatial metaphors that revise the changes in gender roles in *Chhau*.

I see the participation of the females in *Chhau* challenging the dichotomies of private/public spaces that have existed not only in the gender roles in performances of India but also

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8 The model of power/desire/interest has been taken from Gayatri Spivak's article "Can the Subaltern Speak?"
other traditional norms concerning work and in its concerning gender roles. These presentations show not only transformations in the gender roles of *Chhau* to the public eye, but they also are witness of assertions of women's independence against their patriarchal norms⁹.

Binary categories of public and private help to describe and offer the possibility of analyzing the demarcating categories of space and place. Spaces are often associated with different types of activities; the place of the women in the Seraikela and Mayurbhanj regions is seen as the home and since she is considered as the essential bearer and the carrier of tradition, emphasis is laid on child rearing and care. Her role as the caregiver and preserver of tradition is appropriated by set behavioral rules and values; the woman therefore is expected to be a devoted mother, who should prioritize her role as the mother more than her personal career. She is expected to be demure and respectful of elders, and such actions imply that she forsake her own individuality and self-will. Boundaries that demarcate space have gendered implications, according to Nancy Duncan,

> The distinction between the public and the private is deeply rooted in political philosophy, law, popular discourse and recurring spatial structuring practices. These practices demarcate and isolate a private sphere of domestic, embodied activity from an allegedly disembodied political sphere that is predominantly located in public space. The public/private dichotomy is frequently employed to construct, control, and discipline, confine, exclude, and suppress gender and sexual difference preserving traditional patriarchal and heterosexist power structures.

*(Duncan 29)*

⁹ The extended patriarchal family of the Seraikela and Mayurbhanj regions has been discussed in the earlier chapter.
The confinement of women to private spheres and physical spaces can be seen among menstruating Hindu women in Southern India. In some cases, menstruating women are kept in isolated places and their entry into temples is prohibited, as they are considered "impure" because of their body discharge. The physical space of the temples therefore is restricted to women and certain spaces are prohibited to women.

These gendered spatial implications can also be seen in folk dramatic traditions of India. Women have been denied access to such folk dramatic forms as performers, and it remained within the public domain of the "males". The few women who are permitted to participate in such forms have low social value and esteem. In any situation, that involves control and exclusion, the master subject, or the dominant individual or group of the situation constitutes themselves through the exclusive performance in a particular space. This establishes his (the master subject) control of that space. It is by this distance and separation of others in this space that he (the master subject) can affirm his self-identity. In most situations of control, we can see that the exclusion of one gender, mostly of females is to establish an exclusive- control- network of the males. This can be seen in the context of Chhau, since the men maintain this exclusive control and women have been denied access. Therefore, the participatory rights of the women are at stake. The performance venue or the physical space thus becomes the place to show the monopoly of the men, in the patriarchal society that is displayed by their exclusive presence in Chhau.

This can also be seen in the traditional monopoly of the royalty in Chhau of the regions of Seraikela and Mayurbhanj in Eastern India. The Oriyya King at Puri ruled Eastern India during pre-Independent India, belonging to the Manbhum and the Singhbum dynasties. While the chieftains, the Maharajas of Mayurbanj, Sareikela and Chottanagpur, ruled over the
hinterlands. The local warriors, or the Paiks, practiced sword play, or the Parikhanda Khela, a martial art, that was an rehearsal of the battle and also an exercise to maintain physical fitness. When the rulers of the Manbhum and Singbhum dynasty established their rule by mid-nineteenth century, the Parikhanda Khela became the best way to do exercises and maintain physical fitness. The exercises also became a means for popular entertainment, as the music and dance of the regions of local regions, were incorporated in it, which became the genesis for Chhau. During the last part of the 19th century, the local chieftains started taking more interest in Chhau and slowly not only became the supporters through funds but also directly performers.

The inclusion of the women in Chhau, an all male dramatic form from the 1980s onwards comes primarily motivated by the women themselves, through the recognition of their self-worth, their metaphorical space, and through support from government and individual participants or spectators. During the course of this chapter, I will show this realization of self-worth, or the metaphorical space of a female performer, which allows the agency for change in gender roles to operate and function in Chhau. I will establish this by first establishing the low social status of a female performer in India, with a special focus on folk performances. The next section will establish the participation of females in Chhau, as realizations of the self-worth (metaphorical space), of the women that helps to create the agencies of change to operate. The third section will show how this self-realization, and self worth of a female artist, then helping to negotiate with her immediate external spaces i.e. her home and with her family members.

**Women Artists in Performing Genres of India: An Historical and Social Outlook**

Women have always been performers in India since the ancient times. By looking at archeological evidence sculptural depictions in temples, paintings and early dramatic literature
like the Kamasutra (800 A.D.), a treatise on the art of love and lovemaking, many scholars tend to believe that the female performers had a high social standing in ancient Indian society (3000 B.C. to 1200 A.D.). However, the correspondence between these representations and its extension to “real” women can be argued. For e.g. the famous Khajurao caves of Orissa of Eastern India (800 A.D. to 1200 A.D.) depict females playing percussive instruments that later remained in the exclusive domains of the men. We can argue that perhaps these female performers (as shown in the statues) were courtesans, and it was their profession that allowed them to have access to display certain creative skills. The Kamasutra, written by Vatsayana, describes the skills of the courtesan, who was to be well versed in the act of love making but also needed to be equally well versed in music, dance, drama, and painting besides giving them sexual pleasure, in order to please her patrons.

The antecedents to dancing girls and courtesans go back to antiquity. Statues of the Indus Valley civilization (3000-1500 B.C.) show strong associations with music and dance. A bronze figurine of a dancing girl was unearthed in the ruins of Mohenjadaro (northern India) that show the popularity of performing arts in the Indus Valley. The figurine has been found in association with a large number of statues of goddesses that indicates that dancing and music must have had close associations with worship and therefore making it popular. Although, female worship was considered pure and divine during the Indus Valley Civilization, we have to keep in mind the paradoxical situation of female performers in later ages from fifth or sixth century B.C. onwards. Women became the sites of orthodox Hindus as they were seen to be the essential carriers of tradition. According to Mandakranta Bose,

The burden of maintaining order within a family and within society as a whole, fell on women…But this was a responsibility within which women
quickly became imprisoned by the needs of conserving tradition. Instead of embodying positions of decision-making power and defining order, women became vehicles of orthodoxy. (Bose 4)

This paradox can be seen in other areas of worship as well, despite the fact that female worship is an essential part of the religion of India; females are still in some isolated cases "dedicated to temples" that are called the devdasis. These devdasis traditionally were the courtesans and the dancing girls. These women had a low social status and became victims of prostitution.

The only women who were permitted to dance along with the male counterparts in Chhau were these devdasis. They also accompanied the male artists to trips in Europe in the early 1930s. Rajkumar Suddhendra, the last surviving prince of the Chhau tradition remarked in an interview to Hindustan Times in 1994, "While in earlier times, a few devdasis were allowed to do the form (Chhau) in temples the practice was discontinued (Hindustan Times)." The present king, Braj Bhanu Singh, documented this fact in my interview with him during my field trip. Early female participants of Chhau had made visits to Europe and America in the 1930s that were not the members of the royal family. The male accompanists were princes of the ruling dynasty, and the accompanying women were the devdasis or the temple-dancing girls.

It is interesting that the few women allowed to perform Chhau were the dancing girls who accompanied the males, coincidently the princes of the royal house of Sareikela. The connections between the royalty and performing arts are a part of India's cultural history. Often in the past, the court dancers were considered the courtesans, and sometimes the performances were performed in the brothels, which were frequented by high-ranking officers of the court and
warriors. Wade points to this and argues that the courtesan dancers were considered natuch girls when these performances were relegated to the brothels\textsuperscript{10} (126).

A few more examples can make the control between the royalty and the female performers clear. Grace Thompson Seton, a British woman, who traveled in India during the early 19\textsuperscript{th} century remarks on the life of “natuch” girl,

> I entered the dancing girl quarter, which looked like any other middle class street and good fortune! One of the dancing girls was standing in a doorway, arrayed in white trousers and long yellow diaphanous sari. Her middle and feet and arms were bare. She was not young, nor to my mind, good looking, but she had welldeveloped muscles and supported the entire family on her earnings.

I was told that if I would stay a few days longer, H.H. would arrange a Nautch, but that his best dancer, Moti Jan, was away, having been loaned to a neighboring Raja for a wedding festivity. The maharaja subsides all the dancing girls and therefore controls their actions. (Seton 67)

Written in the early 19\textsuperscript{th} century, this quote shows that dancing was relegated to low class women, wearing "diaphanous clothes", supporting their families through their incomes from in prostitution or “entertaining” the high ranking officials of the court, their actions being controlled by the kings (Maharaja). The king clearly treated the women as possessions since these women were “loaned”. The connection between royalty and dramatic forms therefore seems to have had a long historical connection.

Only low class women traditionally performed some classical theatrical forms of India for example Bhartanatyam and Kuchipudi, two major southern Indian dance dramas. Their primary duty was not only to perform in the temples as dancing girls, but they could also

\textsuperscript{10} The British described these courtesans or the dancing girls as natuch or dancing girls.
supplement their family income by serving as prostitutes. Many folk dramatic forms have had
the traditional exclusion of females, and only few forms like the Lavani and Tamasha of Western
India and Nautanki of northern India have included women. These dramatic forms often use
camaraderie and sexual innuendoes; therefore, the female performers of such forms do not have
high social standing. Therefore, these performances are often “popular entertainment" and quite
often-religious themes are not depicted.

Thus, with very few exceptions women were effectively banned from theatrical stage,
whether rural or urban, folk or classical. A striking instance of the extensiveness of this ban can
be seen in Kathakali, an all male form folk dance drama of south India. Wade observes,

\textit{Kathakali} was developed in Kerala, on the southwestern edges of the
subcontinent, in a region that is traditionally matriarchal and in which women
have influential in public affairs and have a reputation for considerable degrees of
freedom in society in general. Yet even in this area, so deeply had the ban on
women penetrated that \textit{Kathakali} had been, and remains, an all male form.

(Wade 129)

Stigmas have been associated with female performers both historically and socially.
Female performers in the past belonged to a set class, the devadasis who married to the gods. The
devadasis who often had to "entertain" men through music and dance and sex thus had some sort
of socio- religious- legal sanction because of this “marriage” to the gods. The links between
marriage and performance also takes on different levels of meanings as many women performers
in India also discontinue their profession after their marriages to men. As Indian tradition places
high emphasis on modesty and virtue, many women do not continue with public performances
after their marriages, since they would come under the public view and scrutiny.
During my field trip many *Chhau* female performers realized this need to discontinue their profession, and Arundhati Nakay, a twenty-five, year old artist at Baripada remarked,

I know that I might not be able to perform *Chhau* after my marriage, as I might not be permitted to do so at my in-laws house. The only solution I see is that I get married to another artist. (Personal Interview)

Narendra Kumar, a male *Chhau* artist, who accompanied me on my trip to Baripada was also asked how he had “permitted" his wife, a *Bhratanatyam* dancer, to continue with her profession by Arundhati. These examples are clear indication that perhaps the only means of sanction for the female performers, the *devdasis*, to continue their professions either as performers was by their marriage to the gods or female artists to marry the male artists.

The context of female performers in *Chhau* today is thus easier to understand by establishing the low social and historical standing of the female performer in India. The choice of performing in folk forms hence is a clear mark to the self-identity and self-awareness of the women. The participation of middle class educated women is a clear indication of the self-consciousness that an Indian women holds in postcolonial global India. The changes in participation of *Chhau* from the *devdasis*, the lower class women, to middle class educated women shows a transformation in the society of Seraikela and Mayurbhanj that is clearly an individual decision of the woman arising in the postcolonial global context. We shall examine now see how this choice of performing in *Chhau* becomes a self-motivation an internalized conscious decision of the female.
Women performers in Chhau of Sareikela and Mayurbhanj of Eastern India

Historical and social stigmas about female performers seem to have been associated with early Chhau female artists as well. An article in Newstime records,

In the early seventies Sulochana Mahanta, practiced Chhau for the first time, despite stiff opposition from the social circles. During the Chhau dance festival at Baripada, unfortunately Sulochana collapsed inside the green room. Though the reasons of her death remained a mystery, people believed that Sulochana died, as she could not bear the strains of this vigorous war dance. And the stigma continued.

The stigmas seemed to have been reinforced by the sudden death of Sulochana Mohanta, who is said to have died due to extreme stress. Traditional authorities explain this sudden death of Sulochana by the origins of Chhau. As Chhau developed from martial art techniques, the Parikhanda Khela (swordplay), that was practiced by the warriors of the Manbhum and Singbhum (eighteenth and nineteenth century) dynasty, the martial art techniques have given the form a "male" or a strong masculine tendency and hence Sulochana could not take the strains of the dance and died. This masculine tendency of the form can be seen in another example. Narendra Kumar, a contemporary male Chhau artist, declared that it was this “masculinity" that attracted him to learn it,

I was always a good athlete and proficient in gymnastics. I was very keen on dancing but I was quite certain that I would not learn any "feminine" forms. My friends reminded me jokingly that my choice to learn any of them (the forms) would bring me great dishonor and shame.
When I saw the jumps, leaps and twirling movements that require strength in *Chhau* I decided to learn this form. (Personal interview).

The connections of masculinity to *Chhau* can be clearly seen in the choice of Narendra Kumar, and these reasons may have been associated with the death of Sulochana. Sulochana who had “opposed stiff resistance" faced untimely death as the form was too "vigorous" and she being a "female" could not take the strain, since the female body is seen as physically weak and unfit for the form.

The male hegemony in *Chhau* can also further be seen in this form as Ustads who are males teach Chhau. This is seen in almost all the other traditional classical forms, like *Oddisi* (Orissa) and *Kuchpudi* (of Andhra Pradesh). The *Ustads* are given very high social respect unlike the women performers. Males not only control teaching but also the playing of certain instruments. The males play the percussive instruments in Chhau, like the Nagara (Kettle Drums), Bansuri (flute) and the Shenayi, (reed trumpet). The female performers in *Chhau* have hence conquered several restrictions that have been placed on them. *Chhau* is clearly a “male oriented martial art form” having had the traditional hegemony of male performers, teachers and instrumentalists. Even the costumers, i.e. the traditional mask makers are males. The participation of the females as performers hence is a challenge to traditional notions and perceptions towards gender roles held in *Chhau*. The participation of women as actors, choreographers, troupe leaders and mask makers are a challenge to the patriarchal notions held in *Chhau*, some specific examples will be discussed later.

Irigaray, one of the leading French feminists, sees space as a medium through which the imaginary relation between self of the female and other is performed. She notes that female identities are formulated at birth; the female subject severs "the cord"(182). According to
Irigaray, since the women constitute the place for the male subject, the women cannot have a place of their own. In the Indian context, the women is the carrier of the tradition and cultural norms. Irigaray explores the space between the self of the woman to the man and she recognizes that “male” “female” dichotomies occur in spaces, and often the imaginary self of the female is placed within relationships to the man. Irigaray recognizes women as "grounds" for debates, contestations and exchanges. While she makes connections to women in heterosexual relations, it becomes important to note that women can be "grounds" for contestations and debates, whether to keep the preservation of the royalty in Chhau or to keep heterosexual male identities in performance roles clear and intact. This can be seen as the male hegemony is maintained in Chhau.

This will become clear by the following example. While I interviewed the female artists at Sareikela, the prince of Sareikela, Braj Bhanu Deo, was concerned to see the dance being done outdoors by the females. However, records can prove that Chhau is performed outdoors during the Chaitra parva festival (spring festival held during April) every year at the palace courtyard and in the village squares. He remarked,

I hate to see the bastardization of this form. This form does not mean that girls should be made to stand in the sun and perform in the streets. It is a royal dance, not to be performed the way it is now. The dance is a set "royal" martial art dance form. (Personal interview)

The performance by the females is of concern to the royalty, as this becomes a process of "bastardization" or corruption of a martial art tradition and is a threat to his “divine” and royal patriarchal presence. The presence of females in the context of Chhau is a reminder to the strong feminine identity in the presence of male performers and the royalty. This is a self-identity, a
marker to the presence of women in this form. The self worth of the individuals involved in this conscious decision of participation should be recognized and seen. According to Irigaray,

While it is true that it makes the “female” presence a ground of debate but the presence of the females in such a "ground" is sometimes not to enhance the position of the males alone, for the smooth workings of man's relations with himself, of relations among men (Irigaray 172).

The participation of the women in the direct view of the royalty is a reminder to him about the changes that are occurring in Chhau and society of Seraikela, which are internalized responses of individual women, who are defying cultural norms and practices of the region.

Julie Leslie and Mary Mc Gee recognize the worth of individuals and correctly point to these identities as being "invented" by individuals in India.

Gender identities and roles may be fluid (in India), but they are also defined and assigned values by cultures and communities; furthermore, they are contained and embodied by individual who measure their self worth according to fulfill (or defy) these culturally defined gendered models. Individuals are constantly in the process of negotiating their identities, finding ways to assert or even hide their identity markers (such as caste, class, age, sexual orientation, education or religious affiliation), which may increase or diminish their status depending on the context in which they find themselves. (Leslie and Mc Gee 45)

The strong choice of participation as in Chhau by females should be seen as contained and embodied in within the individuals who measure their self worth, and defy culture defined gender relations. The royal denigration on the participants further makes the women realize their
self-image and self worth. One of my female respondents remarked, "The present king should realize that the kings are long gone. We are now a free country and are truly independent and can do what we wish” (personal interview).

This statement is a clear indication to the free democratic postcolonial state of India. Women in these regions are aware of their social, cultural, political and aesthetic independence. The self-consciousness is a part of the postcolonial state that creates the unique pan Indian identity for a woman in Chhau. Tripti Bari, one of the female artists that I interviewed, talked about this self-awareness while she watched the Chhau performance for the first time,

When I saw the Chhau dance being done at the Chaitra Parva for the first time, the whirling movements and jumps of the male dancers excited me.

I thought to myself, "If they can do it, why can’t I?" This made me to resolve to learn this form. (Personal interview)

Tripti, in her imagination of herself as a Chhau artist has crossed over the gender distinctions that have been placed in this form, and she defies this notion by her active participation as a performer. Gillian Rose correctly argues on these connections of the individual presence,

The imaginary refuses to distinguish between the social and the symbolic, or the real and the imagined, or the real and the textual, or between the bodily and the cultural, or between agency and structure. And it is this imaginary that I want to think space through. I want to argue that the imaginary is it spatialized and enacts spatialities; it performs the relation between subjects through spatialized relations. It enacts
and produces particular subjectivities through particular spatialities.

(Rose 66)

Tripti's desire and her subsequent choice to become a Chhau dancer reflect her position as the agency allowing new a spatiality to be constructed. Thus, new spatial identities emerge that are metaphorical creating fluidity in gender roles in Chhau. Bari is performing in a new spatial context, since she has crossed over the boundaries by her public presentations to an receptive audience, and also since she is the first member of her family to perform this dance drama. The self-awareness in Tripti gets further entrenched in her, as she is a part the larger Indian postcolonial context. I argue that the self-consciousness of Tripti and self-desire is also linked up to external supports that are a part of the postcolonial global context, which forms the pan Indian identity for her. What makes Tripti's pan Indian identity unique even further is that she is the first member of her family to perform Chhau, and no male members of her household have practiced this form before.

Individual decisions are therefore often aided by external factors. This external support can be explained by the following example, Tapan Kumar Patnaik, the male director of the Government Chhau Dance Center at Seraikela, relates to the introduction of the female artists as an internalized response of the girls that is often facilitated by his encouragement.

When I go with my Chhau dancers to the neighboring villages, I often see young girls look at it (the performance) admiringly. I know that they are keen on doing this dance but are to shy or feel awkward to say so, since it has not been a part of our tradition for girls to perform Chhau. However, with encouragements from my troupe members or me they decide to join the center. (Personal interview)
While the presence of the feminine in *Chhua* is a strong symbol of the fluidity that India maintains towards gender, it is important to note that the role of the women in Indian society has always been a paradox. We can see this paradox in the society of Sareikela when girls were first introduced to this form. Tapan Kumar talked about the initial harsh reaction of his community members when he first introduced the girls to this form during the late 1980s.

> I often had to escort the female performers to their homes, as I was afraid that they might face humiliation or get teased by the males in the villages that they came from. (Personal interview)

While the female in India is respected as a goddess or a symbol of divinity, stemming directly from Hinduism, she is placed in within the realms of her home. Purity among women in India is to be kept within private spaces of homes and the entrance into her into the public world might cause some adverse reactions, since the Indian women are considered to be chaste and therefore have to be placed within private spheres. This can be seen in the initial introduction of women in *Chhau*, needing the "aid" of her male director to escort them to their inner space of homes. This seems to have undergone a change during 2000s, and, during my research, I asked the women performers specifically whether they faced any harassment or public humiliation, and they clearly indicated that public perception towards them had changed. I observed women coming from surrounding villages to learn the form without any fear or trepidation and without any male escorts. This defines the social transformations happening in the regions of Seraikela and Mayurbhanj arise by the creation of a postcolonial global Indian nation. The translocal transformations in the region of Seraikel and Mayurbhanj have thus to be seen in the larger context that is specific to a postcolonial Indian nation.
The female performer therefore had been denied access to performance of Chhau and the females, who did have access to this public domain of the men, were the devdasis and the prostitutes, while the “pure” "divine" women were in private spaces such as homes. Thus, the female performer in Chhau is creating and challenging old traditional authorities. It is through her conscious decision and by her awareness of her gender equality that a change in tradition takes place. Therefore, the metaphorical self-space created by the conscious decision of the artist, as an active performer of Chhau, becomes the primary motivation for her participation.

It is important to note that the participation of women in Chhau is creating changes in gender roles in performance caused by the self-image that women performers have. Many women performers are now choreographing new pieces that show this gender reversal in performance roles. The traditional pieces are based on mythology and Indian tradition that do not have women in the main or central role but in supplementary ones. Maitreyee Pahari has conceptualized one such piece. She designed the Puorush Tredha (conflict and manhood), a dance drama that was performed in Delhi in April 1998. This was based on the mythological story of the princess Chitrangada from the Mahabharata. Chitrangada is trained in archery and martial arts and after meeting the King Arjuna she falls in love with him. Arjuna makes Chitrangada realize that being a woman is as essential as manhood. According to the Sunday Observer the play deals with the message that, "Pourush (manhood) is as integral an element as feminity ". Maitreyee Bihari, the director, shows the many faces of womanhood in this piece and questions manhood, valor and love. She remarked in an interview to the Sunday Observer, “I wanted to bridge the gap between the educated urbanites and the traditional dancers. Such a beautiful dance should not be confined to the interiors".
Therefore, we can see that this new piece is causing the transformation of gender roles, since it questions both manhood and the notions of being female and by the creation of a new piece from tradition; the bridge between the urban and the rural has been created. This can be seen not only in the plot structure, by the reinvention of femininity, but also as a transformed public presentation of Chhau to urban, educated, cosmopolitan Indians. This is a clear indication of the postcolonial image of the Indian women. Many other women are also now choreographing new pieces as an extension of the old since many older forms did not place emphasis on the roles of women. Hence, clearly transformations are creating a new pan Indian identity to urban women.

Raka Maitra and Shagun Bhutani, two women participants of Chhau formed their troupe, the Dancing People, an innovative modern dance group in the late 1990s. They have created an original piece, The Masks of God that is juxtaposed with the old traditional style. Raka Maitra remarked in an interview to the Statesman in April 2000, “Chhau is technically very modern. So we isolated the movements and combined with what I had learnt in modern dance. We also retained the masks and juxtaposed as an actor. The music sequence was traditional drums with modern music.” Hence, “modernity”, the use of non-traditional text, acting style, the masks playing a protagonist and the creation of a new choreographed piece helps to transform Chhau from within for which the women are primarily responsible.

This participation of the women, therefore, causes gender distinctions in performances representation in performance roles to become more fluid. This is further aided by the encouragement of individuals and organizations, male or female, public or private. However, the primary impetus comes from the female herself, and these females having strong internal identities create new benchmarks. This strong internal identity of the female creates new spatial
contexts that can be seen within her home and in the relationships that she maintains towards other members of her family that further aid her decision. The individual spatial contexts are motivated by progressive males and by female artists destabilizing the nexus of the royalty and the devdasis. This also arises as results of the relationships that are established within the families of the artists themselves that help to further the decisions of the artists. The next section will explore the interconnections of the female artists with her family that helps to hasten the process of gender revisions in Chhau.

**Interactions of Chhau Female Performers within their Homes and with other Family Members**

The self-identity of the female participant becomes a pivotal tool for change in the gender identities not only in Chhau but also within her home. Often her family members encourage the women. This becomes apparent in some households where Chhau is maintained as a part of the family tradition. In such cases, the family support allows the female to participate despite traditional restrictions on gender. Chhau at Sareikela employs the use of elaborate masks that are traditionally prepared by male mask makers. V Misra, the mask maker, has encouraged his daughter Aarti Misra (pseudonym), to take up the traditional family skill of mask making, which was once typical for only males of their family. Aarti is the winner of the National award by Sangeet Natak Academy for the young artisans, which a prestigious award given by the Government of India, to young artists. She is the first woman to have been given this award for Chhau mask making. Close relationships with her father had encouraged her decision to follow the profession of a mask maker, and she was the first woman in Seraikela to do so. She remarked in my interview with her, 'My father is solely responsible in fostering and honing my
talents as a mask maker. His initiative has been the primary motivation of my decision (Personal interview).

The national level award of Aarti and her motivation as an artist clearly due to the close connections that she had with her father and the encouragement that has been provided to her by him. Sudhir Kakar, a leading social scientist makes clear connection to the family bonding and the individual merit in India,

An individual's identity and merit are both enhanced if he or she has the good fortune to belong to large harmonious and closely knit family.

(Kakar 121)

While Aarti is continuing with the family tradition of mask making, there is also a clear transition in gender roles in mask making. She is among the first few to learn this skill and her participation in Chhau, as a mask maker is a clear change in the tradition of Chhau aided by the encouragement of her family.

The close bonding of the female participants of Chhau with their in-laws also develops the professional growth and career of women. Many of the families in India do not always resound with solidarity and goodwill amongst the family members. The home, however, allows for a place for intimate bonding between married Indian women and their mothers-in-law or sisters-in-law. This happens primarily since all live within the same household and are a part of the extended family structure. Close relationships between the female with her in-laws sometimes give the woman opportunities to carry on with her professional growth and development.

Ruchi Jain, (pseudonym), a married female Chhau dancer of twenty-five years, echoes these close relationships that she has with her in-laws,
Both my father-in-law and mother-in-law have given me tremendous support to continue with my career. When I go out to perform, both my in-laws accompany me, and they take care of my child who is a two years old.

(Personal interview)

Most Indian women have close interactions with their in-laws, who sometimes take care of the children that giving the daughters-in-law time to pay attention to their career. Ruchi does not come from a household that has had working women prior to her and her maiden mother was a homemaker. Thus, her choice to perform in Chhau has been largely facilitated by the support of her in-laws.

Interestingly, Ruchi did not seem to have approval in her own family's house before she was married. She remarked,

My Bade papa (elder papa, i.e. uncle) did not like me choosing this profession. He felt that this would bring dishonor and shame to my family. I slowly convinced my father who explained to my uncle my passion for the form. My bade papa reluctantly gave his approval and now he is happy with my decision as my in-laws are also supportive.

(Personal interview)

Ruchi was able to follow her passion by friendly coercion and tact with her own family members. Even though I was not given any details of the "methods" that Ruchi Jain employed to coerce her parents, one can speculate that she must have avoided overt confrontations. Perhaps, she was able voice her choice within her patriarchal system, whether her father's or in-laws house by acting within the normative structure, which is distinctly Indian, the specific methods
of these negotiations will be discussed in the next chapter. According to Patricia and Roger Jeffery,

Power is always tenuous and in constant need of being secured because of resistance to it. Such challenges are not necessarily spectacular or revolutionary in nature like outright peasant rebellions. They can be 'everyday resistance', the mundane and ordinary 'weapons of the weak' such as (dissimulation, sabotage, slander). They are typically rather unplanned individual attempts at self-help rather than larger scale coordinated resistance. And the generally avoid overt confrontations that would bring out the full forces of repression. (Jeffery and Jeffery 160)

Ruchi, in her act of "tact" and "peaceful and friendly" coercion is able to mould her family members to agree with her decisions. Ruchi's in-laws are clearly her allies in her professional growth and career. Ruchi and Aarti are, therefore, the primary reinforcing agents who have the best understanding of their patriarchal family, and are able to negotiate within her normative model, whether it is tact or close bonding with their in laws or father. Hence, collaboration and support with family members help the female artists of Chhau to negotiate with their career choices.

The self-identity of the female becomes the tool to create changes in Chhau. This shows the slow introduction of fluidities in gender roles in folk theatrical genres of India with particular reference to Chhau in the states of Jharkhand (Sareikela) and Orissa (Mayurbanj) that are primarily coming from the females of the regions themselves, with support from other individuals, their family or their community. These attempts by the women have given them not only the choice in their profession, but they also maintain tradition, by actively participating in
traditional performances of the region. The women are creating a new history in *Chhau*, since now lower class women who do not have high social value no longer perform it. The entry of middle class women with their strong individualities and internal identities shows a rapid transformation in the image of the woman in postcolonial identity. Through their self-marking presence in *Chhau* a dimension to their pan Indian identity that is both traditional and modern is being created.

The women in *Chhau* use actions that are best suited to their patriarchal system, to maintain this unique balance between modernity and tradition, whether they are tact, persuasion, coercion or open hostility towards their system. They are therefore constantly negotiating with their external boundaries their troupe members and teachers, so that they can carve out their own identity, that is self-created and are self-reflections of their new images. It, therefore, is necessary to establish this process of negotiation of the women participants with their dance troupes that will be demonstrated in the next chapter.
Chapter Three

Negotiating New Spaces: Relationship of the Women Performers within their Troupes

We must cease at once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it 'excludes', it 'represses', it 'censors', it 'abstracts', it 'masks', it 'conceals'. In fact power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production.

(Foucault, Discipline and Punish194)

Power according to Foucault produces realities. He therefore points out that, power can shift from a mere logic of repression and exclusion, to one of proliferation and productivity. Power, therefore, works in complex ways, and there is a multiplicity of networks in which relationships of force take shape and come into play (Foucault, History of Sexuality 194). Power can produce different spatial connections due to the proliferation and productivity of the networked connections between individual selves and others.

In order to explain the creation of the new pan Indian identity of women in Chhau, and the gender revisions in it, it should not be seen as a mere replacement of men by women, but as a process that cuts across several layers of interconnections between the individual and others, the various members of the troupe. The gender revisions in Chhau should be seen as interconnections between the individual self of the women and the various external layers of the artists, i.e. her troupe members, both males and females and her troupe leaders.

In the previous chapter, the self-awareness and the internal consciousness of a woman performer were discussed as being primarily created by the women themselves. I want to argue
that this self-awareness of the women gets manifested in multiple ways. In order to assert her self-awareness, the woman in *Chhau* constantly negotiates with her external spatial boundaries of family and dance troupe members. The individual self, or the self-awareness of the women in *Chhau*, cuts across these external spatial symbolic systems, her troupe leaders and members, and she uses them (the systems) to further her own needs, desires and aspirations. As recognized by Foucault, the individual self, therefore, not only cuts across the spatial systems but also uses them in practices. According to Foucault,

“It is not just in the play of symbols that the subject is constituted. It is constituted in real practices-historically analyzable practices. There is a technology of the constitution of the self, which cuts across symbolic systems while using them. (Foucault *The Foucault Reader* 369)

Going further, we can say that no single symbolic system or practice can be identified for explaining the power revisions between male and female performers in *Chhau*. As Spivak correctly points out, these power revisions should be seen within "transparencies" between practices, or as actions of woman performers between her external spatial systems. By "transparencies", Spivak means the hidden subversive actions that help to reverse and revise power roles and models. I argue that several such “transparencies" of actions and practices exist in *Chhau*, between the performer and her external spaces i.e. her troupe leaders and members. These actions or" transparencies" help to reverse power roles in *Chhau* and the "refusal of sign systems" (Spivak 75) or vehement denial of gender roles, by women in *Chhau* should also to be recognized. I recognize expressions that "refuse sign systems" are vehement denials of power creating varied gender roles. They range from simple denial, strong protestation and private acts of restraint and prudence by the women performers and her troupe members.
During the course of this chapter, by the adoption of a Foucauldian model, I will establish these modes of expression and action of the participation of the female performer in Chhau. The wide spectrum of protest will be identified and established as daily private acts of coercion, tact, restraint and prudence to violent oppositional deeds, i.e. open resistance towards her troupe members and teachers. Since most of the actions of the women performers are non-verbal, hidden and subversive, they cannot be identified easily. However, the subaltern definitions and theories, as propounded by Gayatri Spivak and others, allow us to confront the “impossibilities of such gestures” (Spivak 82). As Spivak points out, for the figure of woman, women themselves can plot the relationship between woman and silence (82). The "figure" or identity of the women in Chhau, therefore, can, be plotted by “silence" or actions, which range from both hidden and subversive, to open and public.

This chapter will show how “transparent" interactions and gestures of negotiation, coercion, prudence, restraint, and tact help the female performers to restructure gender roles in Chhau. The participation of the female performer in Chhau is a result of the individual self-consciousness and self-will of the woman herself. This individual metaphorical space, or self-awareness of the female artist then helps to negotiate with her external symbolic systems or spatial contexts. As no single action can describe these negotiations between the artists and the external symbolic spaces, these it should be seen as "shuffling of signifiers" (Spivak 81). The "signifiers" are the verbal and non-verbal actions that are negotiated or "shuffled" between the artist and her external spaces.

This "shuffling of signifiers" produces a wide range of protests, and as pointed out by Foucault, these denials/ protests lie within complex multi-vocal practices and institutions. The participation of the Chhau female performers should be therefore seen within multiple and multi
vocal contexts, of her relationships to others, her family, her troupe members, teachers and within her community. These transparent interactions and gestures often replace self-interest of one gender group. For example, the participation of the females in Chhau are often results of vehement denegation, or of denial of recognition of these gender roles. The Chhau artist in her strong denials produces a series of actions that could range from silent protests, non-verbal communication to open denial of gender norms. As Spivak points out, the produced “transparency” marks the place of “interest”; it is maintained by "vehement denegation": now this role of referee, judge, and universal witness is one I absolutely refuse to adopt. (Spivak 75)

During the course of this chapter, I will examine the ways in which the Chhau female artists constantly negotiate and coerce their external bodies, i.e. troupe leaders, and male and female colleagues to fulfill their own needs. I want to prove that the female performers are not only the “inert or consenting target of power” but they are also the elements of its articulation" (Foucault Two lectures 98). What I mean here is that power is not a privilege of the dominant groups alone, i.e. the male performers of Chhau but it can be situated within the female performers, who exercise and operate their power using multiple methods.

The Chhau female artists thus constantly negotiate roles within her traditional normative structure of family (as seen in the previous Chapter) and within the troupe to signal her consciousness to other members, her family or her troupe. She often uses "hidden gestures" that "do not add up to revolt and overthrowing of authority" and should be seen by "assessing the contexts" (Kumar 13) in which she is placed. The Chhau artist realizes their internal consciousness and their individual will becomes the primary motivation for participation in this dramatic medium.
As the Chhau dance troupes have a set hierarchical principle, the participation of women in this top-down structure has large implications. It not only is a challenge to other male dancers, but also affects the higher authoritative bodies, since now women are not only actors but are reordering the structure by choreographing, organizing and training other students both males and females. We will examine the organizational structure of the Chhau troupes in the next section.

Organizational structure of the Chhau troupe at Baripada and Seraikela

A brief survey of the organizational structure of the performing troupes will allow us to look into the interpersonal relationships between its members. Before the Independence of India in 1947, Chhau in the regions of Baripada was organized into camps. The city of Baripada was divided under two main teachers, Brundaban Chandra Banj Deo (Uttar Sahi, northern camp), and Gokul Chandra Bhanj Deo (Dakshinsahi, southern camp) in 1882, under the leadership of the king, Maharaja Krushna Chandra Bhanj Deo (1868-1882). Monetary funds were given to the artists, and, by the 1930s during the era of Maharaja Pratap Chandra, a manager, who was appointed by the king maintained direct supervision. The manager along with the support of the king coordinated into the training, rehearsal and presentation of the dance.

The organization of Chhau suffered greatly after India's Independence in 1947, as the princely state of Baripada became a part of the state of Orissa. This meant that princely patronage was no longer available for the artists. According to K. Biswal, an Indian scholar on Chhau,

The art form, which was hitherto dependent upon the maharajas (ibid.)
Kings) for its survival and growth now depended on the people as a whole. As the artists art lovers who took up the responsibility of nurturing the art forms were not affluent enough to offer patronage for its sustenance they had to struggle a lot to establish its footing. (Biswal 16)

In 1949, the artists of the southern group, or the Dakshin Sahi of the city of Baripada, came forward and they formed the Mayurbhanj Chhau Dance Organization. The management was later shifted to the District Magistrate of Schools. In 1960s, the organization was disbanded, and the state government of Orissa formed the Mayurbhanj Chhau Nritya Prathisthan under whom the two sahis (camps) were reorganized. The troupe organization at Seraikela followed similar patterns like Baripada. Patronage from the Singbhum dynasty prior to India's Independence in 1947, served as the primary foundation for the dramatic form at Seraikela. The participation of the royalty of this dynasty as performers gave Seraikela Chhau a distinct uniqueness. Some of the princely performers like Aditya Pratap Deo and Rajakumar Sudhendra were not only responsible for the organization of the troupe, but also made Chhau widely popular in the west through foreign tours.

After Independence of India, the Government Chhau Dance Center at Seraikela was formed in 1965. The Center is now running under the Department of Art, Culture, Sports and Youth affairs under the newly formed state government of Jharkhand. Since its inception, it has been instrumental in popularizing Chhau all over national and international areas. The Center has participated in a number of reputed national and international cultural events such as The Festival of India at France, U.S.S.R and Japan, and it has also participated in cultural exchange programs with South Korea, Indonesia, Malaysia, and other European and Asian countries. It has so far successfully trained about 500 students and has set up a mask-making department
through which more than 100 students are undergoing regular training. Many members of the faculty and students are recipients of the *Sangeet Natak Academy Award* for meritorious performers and artisans of Indian culture, by the Department of Culture, Government of India.

The *Chhau* troupes are based on hierarchical lines, at the head of the centers are clearly the patrons, who could be either the government or as in the past, the princely patrons. The patrons are chiefly instrumental for not only teaching *Chhau* but also making it popular in India and abroad. Below the chief patrons and the teachers (the *ustads*), are the musicians, who can also be dancers. The dancers are lowest in the hierarchy of the troupe, and they are answerable to the troupe leaders, their teachers and the local patrons. The teachers alone can choreograph the dance and impart the instructions to the artists, who can suggest any changes, which are purely discretionary. The dancers all are at the same level, however age and sex can be major determining factors to enhance or negate a position of an artist, the eldest male dancer having the most value.

The introduction of females in *Chhau* started as early as 1930s. We have documentary evidences to prove that women accompanied the male *Chhau* dance performers to Europe. However, it was after 1980s through the efforts of the state governments of Orissa and Bihar\(^{11}\), that the rapid introduction of females in *Chhau* took place. One of the reasons for this might have been the favorable political climate of India during the 1980s. The Indian Constitution was amended in 1986, and 33% of seats in all educational, economic, social and legislative organizations were reserved for women. This amendment might have led the dance centers to introduce women in greater rapidity, since the centers were run under the state government, and were required by law to induct more women to get further grants from the government. Despite

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\(^{11}\) Jharkand was formed in the 1990s and is a fairly new state; Seraikela prior to the formation of Jharkhand came under Bihar state government.
the introduction of the females, the actors/dancers are placed under restrictions regarding choices in performance piece, techniques and instruction. The female actors in Chhau thus have constantly negotiated with traditional barriers that placed on them. During the course of the next sections, we will see these negotiations of the female artist with their male and female colleagues as well their troupe leaders. We will also analyze this process of negotiation between the female artist and others by looking at various examples.

**Relationship of the Female Artist with her Male and Female Colleagues**

The Chhau troupe essentially exists like a close-knit community, male and female artists, actors, musicians and teachers, consider themselves as belonging to a common family and community. Unspoken rules about sexuality between the males and the females are thus maintained as chastity is considered as one of the greatest virtues for an Indian woman. According to Sudhir Kakar, mythological figures like Sita (the wife of god Rama of the Hindu epic *Ramayana*), Damayanti and Savitri (ideal wives from the epic *Mahabharat*) emphasize "formidable consensus on the ideal of womanhood" (68). These mythological figures advance the values of obedience, servitude, endurance and faithfulness as the main characteristics of a chaste woman. Therefore, despite having no blood connections, the troupe leaders or the ustads are not only considered teachers as but also as fathers and hence the other male artists (*Guru Bhaiya*), brothers by the women in the group. The female Chhau artist expresses this bond calling her male troupe members *bhiaya* (brother).

This filial integration often places restrictions between the male and female troupe members. Physical contact and bonding between the sexes is highly restrained outside the rehearsal process. Kakar rightly points out that this filial integration might cause "severing of
attachments" of the woman to all other boys and men known in her life who might "inevitably belong to the extended kinship" (72). If the woman breaks these rules and discards her chaste role, she could face rebuking by her family, dance troupe members and community. However, these stringent rules are not the norm and free intermingling of sexes can be seen in Chhau troupes in Delhi and other larger metropolitan cities. Since the metropolitan cities of India are largely cosmopolitan, strict societal rules are not maintained.

According to Kakar, Indians view the ideal superior or the teacher or elder males as the one who acts in a nurturing way, and hence their subordinates either anticipate their wishes or accept them without questioning. Elder male Chhau members are therefore treated with great respect. Any restraints to their authority by the females are through quiet, subdued and evasive techniques, without any open attack or hostility towards the elders. During my field research at Baripada, Tripti Naik (pseudonym) expressed her desire to learn a technique of dance that had she had been prevented from learning by her teacher. The teacher had prevented her doing so because of the high energy involved, and, since this technique involved a somersault, the teacher felt it was inappropriate for Tripti because of her gender. Tripti, during the course of my interview, asked Narendra Kumar¹² my accompanying Chhau artist, whether he would teach her this technique. Narendra accepted her request and taught her the step while the other male colleagues were watching.

Tripti clearly used a subversive method by not asking her male colleagues but rather an outsider, and she is openly defied traditional male authority in her troupe. She also took a major risk of facing social disapproval from her seniors by challenging their knowledge of training, and by asking an outsider to teach her a technique that had not been taught by her ustad. It is interesting to note that Tripti did not use any verbal accusations on her teachers, but rather in her

¹² Narendra Kumar is an independent Chhau dancer residing in New Delhi.
subdued method learnt what had been withheld from her. I would argue that this technique is both peaceful and coercive at the same time, peaceful, since Tripti refrains from open verbal accusations on her teachers, coercive, since she openly defies traditional authority by asking the assistance of a relative outsider.

Tripti in her "peaceful coercive technique" and subdued request won over her case. She has crossed over the restriction that had been placed by her teacher and has defied authority. She clearly broke and defied traditional gender restrictions placed some techniques of Chhau. As Kakar points out, “open confrontations" to authorities does not occur as "younger professionals have from childhood internalized the 'hierarchical tradition' ", however the professionals explore and find ways around that tradition.

Through peaceful negotiations with her male members of her troupe, the women Chhau artists achieve their desires. As Spivak points out, "theory" becomes a " relay of practice" as the " oppressed can know and speak for themselves" (Spivak 74). Tripti as the " oppressed" knows how to mold her system and thus " speak for herself". The self of Tripti, both the physical in performance and the metaphysical in mind, has hence transgressed the boundaries in Chhau. According to Haraway, "boundaries materialize in social interaction. Boundaries are drawn by mapping practices; 'objects' do not pre exist as such…but boundaries shift from within" (Haraway 201).

The boundaries placed on the techniques of Chhau and the traditional restrictions are shifted within Chhau itself and not through any other external body. Tripti as a member of her troupe is able to convince her male colleagues to teach her the techniques that she had been denied. She does not seek any external help, despite her method of seeking assistance from an
outsider, but rather coerces her own male colleagues from other regions, to teach her the required skill that would give her an equal footing with her male counterparts.

The relationship of the female artist with her other female colleagues is in sharp contrast to her relationships with male members. While restraint and chastity has to be maintained with the males, the female artist has deep bonding with the rest of her female team members. Therefore, strong bonds between the women in the Chhau dance troupe can be seen. As Kakar correctly points out every female is born into a well-defined community of women within her particular family that allows for a special kind of inviolate feminine privacy and familiar intimacy (71). Special bonding and attachments between the female artists, sometimes allow a female performer to negotiate with her larger social choices that might affect her career in Chhau. This can be seen in the context of Ruchi Jain (pseudonym), a married Chhau dancer.

Despite Chhau female artists often having to discontinue their profession after their marriages, Ruchi Jain continues to practice her profession after her marriage. One possible reason for this could be the nature of her wedding. Ruchi Jain has had a “love marriage" i.e. a marriage of her own choice and has married another performer from another dance troupe. As discussed earlier most marriages in India are "arranged" by the parents of the respective grooms. Ruchi clearly broke societal norms by her marriage with the help of her female colleagues. Her female friends within her troupe helped Ruchi by convincing her parents about her choice. According to Ruchi,

I was fortunate to have made good friends in my dance troupe, as they helped me convince my parents to agree to my “love" marriage. They often helped me meet my boy friend without my parents finding about it.

(Personal interview)
Even though I did not get enough details on the methodologies that Ruchi employed to convince her parents, one can speculate that her close relationships with other female members might have helped Ruchi’s choice. As Patricia and Roger Jeffery, argue about marriages in India,

A marriageable girl (whether educated or uneducated) who voices an opinion on her future marriage knows she is playing with fire. In the face of the potential wrath of her entire family, silence is prudent. (Jeffery and Jeffery 133)

In most parts of India, women do not express an interest in their own marriages, as it would be deemed as being "shameless" and dishonoring the family. As most marriages are arranged by the parents and are seen as the primary responsibility of the parents, women do not express desire in arranging their own. Ruchi, is therefore, able to exercise her autonomy and choice in marriage, and she is able to thus manipulate her environment to suit her needs through prudent means, by using her friends as mediators and collaborators. As pointed out by Kakar this comradeship between women, are not only an "Indian girls' teachers and models but her allies against the discriminations and inequities of that world and its values" (61). Nita Kumar points out that females are to be seen as subjects with their own will, rationality and meaning that allows them to remake the world (19). She further argues, “even when the terms of the discourse seem unchanged, the slight displacement of a symbol from its conventional positioning is enough to codify completely different opposing meanings for the subject” Kumar 21).

In the above example, we can see that Ruchi has clearly altered the symbol of the normative arranged marriage in her family. By changing the context of her marriage and having her choice over that of her parents, she has created a real tangible option in her career. One,
therefore, cannot negate the position of this "love -marriage" of Ruchi and how it conclusively opens her to a different area of negotiation in the performance of Chhau. Ruchi after her marriage is able continue to practice her career as a performer, since her husband is also a performer, and, by her continuing to perform, she is maintaining the family tradition. By slightly displacing the symbol of her marriage to that of her individual choice and not that of her parents, Ruchi is able to bring a very different meaning to her professional career.

The female artist of Chhau, thus, constantly negotiates with her external boundaries of set relationships which can be seen either by comradeship with her colleagues or by subversive methods against them. The artist therefore, consciously reconfigures boundaries not only in Chhau but also in larger societal norms like their marriages. They are clearly working against defined hierarchical organizational structure of the troupe. The context of the Chhau artist also gets new definitions in their meanings when they are in contact with high positions of authority, their teachers. The women are able to carve out a unique distinctive identity, which sometimes arises because of interactions between the woman performer and the teacher. The next section will examine the relationship of the female Chhau artist to her teachers and look at the ways in which such interactions result in a new identity.

**The Female Chhau Artist and her Teachers**

A set hierarchical order is based in the internal dynamics of the group. Hence, the female actor, at the lowest rung on accounts of her sex and position in the troupe, always maintains formal restraint and respect towards her teachers. Kakar argues that the principle of "hierarchical ordering of social dependencies" extends "beyond its home base in the extended family to every other institution in Indian life " (119). He goes on further to state "the mode of relationship is
characterized by an almost maternal nurturing on the part of the superior, by filial respect and compliance on the part of the subordinate (119).

The female performer considers her teachers like “fathers” and show formality in her gestures towards him. Restraint and formality is shown through daily actions and gestures. The students both males and females often start the performance by some symbolic gestures suggesting their obedience to the teachers' authority, like the touching of his feet. However, sometimes non-verbal communications like direct eye contact and silence towards the teacher can show deference. The student and the teacher will normally not engage in any direct confrontation, as it would bring about great social disapproval. Normally a student who does not agree with his teachers will use “subtle” techniques that show his or her resistance to the Ustads.

I watched some of these non-verbal gestures of defiance while I was at the field. At Baripada, a few of the female performers chose not to show any of the symbolic gestures of respect, and therefore did not touch the feet of the ustads or the teachers present during my interview. One can only speculate on the context, but we can say that since the teachers present at the interview did not introduce these women into the form, the female artists might have chosen not to show respect to these teachers. Some questions asked by me seemed to reflect this, when I inquired about the dates of the introduction of women as performers to Baripada, to the teachers, some of their answers also provoked quick direct eye contact by the female artists, which might be an indication of the discontent of the women.

Since Indian tradition places high value on modesty and chastity, women in India often restrain from direct eye contact and do not look men straight in the eye. Direct eye contact by the women to the men sometimes serves as alternatives to their resistance towards men. During my interview with the teachers, I often saw the female artists looking directly into the eyes of the
teachers, which might have been symbolic forms of their resistance towards their ustads. Nita Kumar distinguishes these non-verbal interactions as alternative discourses.

The perspective we can adopt is of alternative discourses, where signs indicating a woman's subjugation exist, are seemingly accepted, passively or actively, but are most often changed. New spaces are constantly created from within which women can speak and create in their own terms their own definitions of autonomy and power. (Kumar 21)

Women in Chhau, therefore, speak in their own terms and in their own mean of resistance against their patriarchal superiors and colleagues, as no single mode of challenge can be identified it is a “unfixed signifier”. As Spivak argues this “unfixed place of the woman as a signifier” becomes pivotal for woman's consciousness” (Spivak 95). The woman performer in Chhau thus, “signals her consciousness, her will and most likely her protest” (Kumar 13). Her will does not resort to any violence or any open hostility towards her teachers but is on the "inside, private, hidden and silenced" it is thus "mysterious and indistinguishable" (Kumar 21). By symbolic gestures of defiance that are "hidden and silenced", the women in Chhau indicate their strong self-will and individuality. They cannot be disregarded since they are subtle, overt and are non-verbal; these hidden means and methods help to create the internal consciousness for the woman.

These internal consciousnesses of the Chhau artists encourage the purposeful agents that revise the spatial gender relations in Chhau. These overt, hidden and subtle methods create the “informal nexus” of power, between the female artists and her troupe members, facilitated through the internal consciousness of the artist. Stanley Cohen remarks,
Consequently, alternatives to the social control system result in a "gradual" expansion and intensification of the system; a dispersal of its mechanisms from more closed to more open sites and a consequent increase in the invisibility of social control and the degree of penetration into the social body. (Cohen 84)

The "technology of power" becomes a medium through which formal control of the teachers and informal control, of the female artist blurs to become one cohesive form that cause the invisibility of control of the women. This "gradual intensification" became evident while a Chhau dance rehearsal was in process at Baripada. The piece that was practiced was Mahisuramardini, a mythological tale in which a female goddess (Mardini), riding on a lion, destroys the demon (asura). For the rehearsal process, the troupe leader selected a woman to play the role of the goddess and two young men to play the lion and the demon. It was interesting that in the performance of this piece the central figure, the goddess, does not destroy the demon, but it rather became a duel between the lion and the demon. This "power demonstration" between the two young men had clearly changed the mythological story and base as the piece showed a duel between the lion and the demon. At that given moment, the woman artist took the chance to explain the real context of the mythology. She remarked, "You may recall the story of real story of Mahisasuramardini, this is a piece choreographed by my troupe leader." The woman had made it clear that this was an adapted piece. I want to argue that the explanation of the "truth" in the myth is the "technology of power", or the "informal control" by the women. I would also like to define the explanation of the myth as a "verbal slippage" (Spivak 69).

The desire or the individual self of the women leads to the explanation of the myth, or a production of power or "verbal slippage". As Spivak points out,
Desire leads to the production of the desiring machine: 'negotiations can also be seen as verbal slippage' The unrecognized contradiction within a position that valorizes the concrete experience of the oppressed, while being so uncritical about the historical role of the intellectual is maintained by verbal slippage. (Spivak 69)

_Mahisauramardini_, as a performance piece has an unrecognized contradiction, as the protagonist is the lion, the male and not the goddess, the woman. The woman shows control and resistance by explaining the mythology, and by negotiating through verbal slippage. This way the woman is "uncritical" on the intellectual content of the piece but she does "valorizes the concrete experience of the oppressed." The explanation of the troupe leader who recreated this piece, valorizes the position of the oppressed the women. The explanation was explained in such a way that it negotiated without being uncritical of the troupe leader, yet it clearly indicated the oppressed in this situation.

The females to should see examples of these resistances within gender roles in Chhau as "covert and individualistic attempts" “ameliorate their situation” (Jeffery and Jeffery 165). Most of the examples here in this chapter have been used to show a cross section of parallel methods of resistance to power. According to Foucault, power is everywhere, not because it embraces everything but because it comes from everywhere (History of Sexuality 93-4). As Kumar correctly points out,

The whole spectrum of protest, from daily 'private' acts and intentionally ambiguous language to elaborate myths and execution of violent oppositional deeds should be seen as part of the same structure of power as that which creates the dominant discourse. Because we know that power is not located at any one level but diffused throughout the system,
because power is never unilaterally exercised, both parties to its exercise constitute it and respond to it. (Kumar 21)

Thus, no fixed action can be identified for the female performer of Chhau "in reality, power means relations, a more or less organized, hierarchical, co-ordinate cluster of relations " (Foucault Discipline and Punish 198). Thus, these relations cause wide range of actions that have desired effects.

Conclusively we can see that by the manipulation of social symbols, participation of women in Chhau becomes a self-created process. However, these selves created process also work within national and global contexts. It therefore is important to look at national and global factors that give women a distinct, new, pan Indian identity. National and international support to Chhau artists creates the unique pan Indian identity of the woman. The next chapter will establish the national and global influences on women in Chhau and the creations of this new identity.
Chapter Four

Emerging Pan Indian Identities: National and Global Influences on Chhau Performers

The emergences of the new identities of Chhau female artists have to be located within the cultural, political and historical truths of India. The significance of the Chhau participants and their role as agents, creating changes in gender roles should be seen within emerging postcolonial Indian identity of women in a global context. In this chapter, I will establish how the emergence and the participation of female Chhau artists are a result of the emerging postcolonial national identity and look at the multiple factors influencing their participation.

Kirin Kapadia, Rajeshwari Sunder Rajan and other postcolonial Indian feminists see an emerging Indian global postcolonial nation that results in a new identity or a “pan-Indian identity" for women (Sunder Rajan 130). This pan-Indian identity should be seen within large, encompassing factors, which go beyond individual and regional specificities and are national in character. Kapadia argues "links between specific localities, simultaneously with its focus on an encompassing domain have an over reaching level" (Kapadia142). Therefore, the position of a female artist as a performer of Chhau should be located within multiple spatial contexts. These can be identified as aesthetic, cultural, social, political, metaphysical, regional national and global contexts. This paves the way for the emergence of a "pan-Indian identity" of Indian women who are balancing both modernity and tradition.13

According to Sunder Rajan,

In the contemporary discourse of women in India, a significant mode of interpellation and projection can be perceived in the construction of a

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13 I argue that postcolonialism should be taken as an “complicit" entity and as a cultural construct. It advances thus several meanings, "metonymy over metaphor, hybridity over purity, syncretism over difference, pluralism over essentialism or pan textualism, and diglossia over monoglossia" (Misra and Hodge 286).
'new' 'Indian' woman. She is 'new' in the sense of having evolved and arrived in response to the times, as well as of being intrinsically 'modern' and 'liberated'. She is 'Indian' in the sense of possessing a pan-Indian identity that escapes regional, communal, or linguistic specificities, but does not thereby become 'westernized'. (130)

The *Chhau* artist is “intrinsically liberated” as her self-awareness and self-consciousness creates the agency for change. However, this individual agency not only 'escapes' individual or regional specificities of Seraikela and Mayrurbanj but also works within the multiple layers of a postcolonial nation that transcend the local or regional influences. According to Kapadia these contexts for the Indian female are located in regional and domestic, micro levels but transcend the local,

In these historic emancipatory projects, new consciousness or 'Imaginaries' (Castoridas 1987) are the sites, where these groups, to construct distinctive modernities that are located at the micro levels of both the household and local caste - community, but that transcend the local in meanings and aspirations appropriate the "translocal".

(Kapadia 143)

Kapadia locates this pan-Indian identity in "translocal spaces" that she defines as "the space between the urban and rural" (158). The participation of the *Chhau* artist is therefore, in such translocal space that transcends micro levels of self worth of the women and their interactions in her troupe, family and community. The agency of the self worth of an artist is the result of multiple factors: help and support from the local and the state governments and support

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14 Appadurai notes translocal as being, “reincarnated as the break between tradition and modernity and typologized as the difference between ostensibly traditional and modern societies.” (Appadurai 3)
from foreign artists. According to Rajeshwari Sunder Rajan, authority and power can also be defined on the “basis of decision-making processes”. She defines authority as those decisions that are “enacted through publicly recognized institutions” and are derived from the exercise of authority, whereas “the influence exerted through informal channels’ is an aspect of power” (Rajan).

The participation of Chhau artists are sometimes a result of powers of authority who are responsible for decision making processes, the participation of the women in all male art form. These decisions become the meeting points or the points of suture from which the individual self-worth emerges. According to Stuart Hall,

…the meeting point, the point of suture, between the multiplicity of social institutions, discourses and practices contend to position us as social subjects of a particular kind, and the individual self who emerges from and circulates through that social world.

(Hall 5-6)

The Chhau artist emerges in such translocal spaces as social subjects of multiple factors that influence her decision. The female identity of the Chhau performers arises within large encompassing social interactions (between the selves of the artists and translocal social identities as a part of a postcolonial Indian nation). The decisions of a female artist of Chhau are given impetus by both the national government of India and the state governments of Orissa and Jharkhand, as well as through informal support from foreign female artists. These decisions hasten the process of gender revisions in Chhau.

Gender roles in Chhau thus are being constantly remade and redistributed through these collective social interactions. The individual will, identity and thus the agency of the Chhau
artist is within these collective subjectivities. The subject of feminism as recognized by Sunder Rajan, should break out from “powerless subaltern woman- as- victims" or “the powerful individual of agency modeled on hegemonic paradigms of agency" (Sundar Rajan 120). It becomes important to frame agency beyond individual self- will and look at encompassing and multiple factors that are arising in postcolonial India.

The female performers are therefore within an intersecting and complex mosaic of gender roles, family and kinship values, community codes, regional specificities and a postcolonial nation. The meanings of gender cannot be seen in simple binaries of exclusion or inclusion, and meanings are specific to the woman's traditional activities like house keeping and the raising of children. Governmental and public support helps to situate new identities of gender roles in Chhau and for the identities of collective subjectivities in postcolonial India. We will now examining support from the government both at the regional and national levels and public support through external agencies such as foreign artists that result in this new identity of the female performer in Chhau.

**Governmental and State Support to Chhau Female Artists**

The reorganization of Chhau as an important folk dance form of the states of Orissa and Jharkhand has been receiving governmental support at the national levels ever since its Independence in 1947. Prior to the Independence of India, royalty in the regions of Mayurbhanj and Seraikela patronized Chhau. This changed after the Independence of India and during the later years of the 1950s, the state government of Orissa directed the Inspector General (Superintendent of Police) of Mayurbhanj to form the *Mayurbhanj Chhau Nritya Prasisthan* (MCNP)
The MCNP was responsible for the early introduction of females to the art form. However, the women did not have exclusionary rights to female performance roles as male artists continued to perform the female roles along with the female performers. One possible reason to explain this was the paradoxical attitude that newly Independent India maintained towards women. The new independent nation extended the “paternalistic role” that British colonial rule maintained towards “protecting” Indian women. The beginnings of colonial rule in India saw a series of social reform laws being enforced on women along with the “indigenous male elite” that determined “certain tropes of modernity for Indian women” (Sen 463). During the 1950s the introduction of women to Chhau can be seen as the extension of this “patriarchal interest” and “paternalistic support” by the government through “administrative pragmatism” (Sen 463).

The rapid infusion of women to Chhau from the 1980s onwards was created within a political climate. The Chhau Nritya Prasisthan, registered as a society under the Society Registration Act of 1980, thereby serving as a catalyst for women during the decade and was simultaneously a high mark for women's movements in India. Even though the several women's organizations “did not bid for hegemony”, they had a “national profile” (Sen 515). According to Samita Sen, “the various all-India campaigns launched by “women activists engendered a cultural radicalism” for India (516). Cultural radicalism, according to Sen, is the negation by the feminists of certain social ills (dowry, female infanticide, bride burning) that place Indian women in a low status compared to men. This cultural radicalism can be partially credited for the rapid introduction of women in Chhau that mirrored the emerging equality of women in Indian society.
The efforts of the state and the national governments are also closely linked to the governmental initiatives towards culture and tourism. Orissa, the home state of Mayurbhanj, is one of the major tourist destinations of India. *Chhau*, being officially recognized as one of the major folk forms by the states of Orissa and Jharkhand, has tremendous potential to attract tourism. One way to promote tourism by the government is through economic incentives to artists. Because many of the female *Chhau* performers are receiving government stipends of Rs. 3000 per month (approximately $60), some women are motivated to continue the art as professional careers. One of my female respondents, a 21-year-old college student, validated this as a major reason for choice,

I was awarded a national scholarship from the *Sangeet Natak Academy* (academy for theatre and music) run by the government of India that is a major supplement to my family income. I am proud that my skill can be used to support my family and I want to make *Chhau* as my career.

(Personal interview)

According to Iliana Sen, the extent to which economic independence liberates or crushes the Indian women is an "open question" (376), but the opportunities for employment cannot be negated. From the above case, it is clear that *Chhau* becomes a source of income for the performer's family; however the "influencing" factor for the choice in career can be an open-ended question. This economic gain cannot be ignored and as Sunder Rajan points out,

A specific 'feminine', if not feminist use of power is spelt out as a result of this distinction, in terms of strategies of persuasion, manipulation, bargaining, simple suggestion and other forms of influence which are non coercive and non threatening but effective in gaining ends.
Women's participation in *Chhau* must also include the influence of women in the public offices and the administration of law. The state of Jharkhand was formed in the year 2000, and through the support of important female public officials, the first annual *Chhau* festival was organized in Seraikela from 10th to 13 April 2001. This annual festival attracts both male and female performers at grassroots levels. Hence, this opportunity paves the way for many artists to not only have an access to public performance venues but also to display their skills to decisive powers in the government who can further their needs.

An important center at Seraikela, the *Seraikela Chhau Dance Center* has encouraged many female performers to participate in state and national level dance festivals. These opportunities provide the female performer at grassroots to have experiences that are beyond the translocal. One of my female respondents talked about this experience,

My trip to the national youth festival held in Delhi was unique, as I had the opportunity to not only meet other dancers from various parts of India but also be exposed to varied cultural experiences. I might have never had access to such opportunities as I always travel with my parents or other members of my family.

(Personal interview)

Representation of the female artists therefore becomes a cultural construct that also protects the interests of the female. Ideological initiatives of the government help to promote indigenous folk forms while creating a new definition for the Indian woman. These initiatives should be seen not only as political agendas but also as creating new definitions for the "liberation" of women. As pointed out by Sundar Rajan,

The liberation of women is separated from the contemporary women's movement: by making liberation a matter of individual women's
achievement and choice, the development of the new woman is made to appear as a ‘natural’ outcome of benevolent capitalist forces\textsuperscript{15}.

During 1994, the central government of India extended its support to \textit{Chhau}. It started a project for imparting the training of \textit{Chhau} and the Sangeet Natak Academy (the national academy for music and drama), which is administered by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. The Central Government of India recognized four districts of Mayurbanj to promote \textit{Chhau}, Baripada, Rairangpur, Chitrada and Bhurkundi. During my visit to Baripada, a local organizer of \textit{Chhau} confirmed that one female artist had been selected to receive training during 1995; however, she discontinued her training after her marriage. Since then, no female has been selected by the Sangeet Natak Academy as it “refrains" from selecting female participants because many discontinue after their marriage.\textsuperscript{16} The governmental policies now maintain a certain ambiguity towards females. As Sen points out the present political situation of India “preclude concentrations that are only of interest to women” as “feminist politics has to address the many competing class/caste/ community ethnic struggles for justice and equality” (516).

The implications of central and state government support to \textit{Chhau} participants have larger implications that go beyond mere gender revisions in performances by creating a new ideological mode for postcolonial India. According to Sunder Rajan, one has to recognize “the ontology of the collective subjects that causes the transformation of 'being' or the process by which an individual self “shifts from individual relations” to the “ideology of the social groups” (Sundar Rajan 120). Conclusively a new construct for the post-colonial Indian woman is

\textsuperscript{15} India is a socialist country however, it encourages a “free economic pattern" with partial control of the state on production and distribution. Rajeshwari Sudar Rajan hence defines this ("benevolent capitalism") to distinguish from western definitions.

\textsuperscript{16} The female participants that I interviewed were receiving training at Baripada due to encouragement from local teachers.
create, a woman who does not "jeopardize the notions of tradition" but also attends to her national identity as well as to her modernity. Female participants of Chhau maintain this balance between "modernity" and tradition through conjugality in their families and communities and at the same time maintaining their equality in a heretofore-male form.

Sundar Rajan maintains that the “new Indian woman” is constructed as a response to specific “social, economic and political imperatives” (132). The introduction of females in the new millennium of post-colonial India should be seen in large, encompassing, global perspective. One cannot ignore global influences in Chhau as support is not only coming from local or national levels but also from foreign artists creating another important dimension to the ideology of post-colonial India. In the next section we will discuss these specific support systems and implications for women in Chhau.

International support to Chhau female performers

One cannot ignore recent global factors influencing indigenous folk forms and the international support given to Chhau. These factors such as globalization, commercialization, and modernization work along side with support from governmental bodies both at national and regional levels to women performers of Chhau. These global influences can be seen in Chhau, as it is no longer under the exclusive domains of region or the royalty who have been traditional patrons. This creates a new dimension for this performing art.

The antecedents of international support can be seen as early as the 1930s. Ragini Devi\(^\text{17}\), a popular dancer and exponent of Bhatanatyam, another indigenous dance form, came to Seraikela during the 1930s to learn Chhau from the royalty and the local Ustads (or the

\(^{17}\) Ragini Devi was of foreign decent who made India her home and became a citizen.
However, Devi's visit did not influence the local women and *Chhau* continued to be practiced by the *Devdasis*, the dancing girls. The foreign women continued to give support to *Chhau* during the 1930s.

Kunkum Sangari and Suresh Vaid remark on these constructed female identities that are sometimes influenced by global factors. According to them,

Female-ness is not an essential quality. It is constantly made, and redistributed; one has to be able to see the formation of female-ness in each and every form at a given moment or in later interpretations, and see what it is composed of, and what its social correlates are, what its ideological potentials are, what its freedom may be. (348)

The participation and training of Ragini Devi in the local regions of Seraikela indicates the female-ness that is created in *Chhau*. Despite it not having direct and immediate influence on the local women, it had immense implications on later female participants performing at grassroots levels. Most of the respondents that I interviewed remembered several anecdotes about early foreign artists. Braj Bhanu Singh Deo, the present king of Seraikela remarked in my interview with him,

*Chhau* at Seraikela under the rule of the royalty was so highly acclaimed a popular dancer as Ragini Devi came during the 1930s to learn *Chhau* from local gurus (teachers). She was willing to live at Seraikela, a small rural town, at that time, despite being used the “modern” and comfortable lifestyle of the west. (Personal Interview)

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18 This fact was confirmed by both Braj Bhanu Singh Deo, a member of the royal family at Seraikela as well the son of Ragini Devi', Ram Rehman.
The fact that this early influence during the 1930s came from an international artist is indicative of the colonial rule of the British, women, modernity and nationhood were important links to legitimize the colonial rule. Sen indicates that the "women question" was the "touchstone of colonial-nationalist encounter the inscribed the trope of modernity and legitimating of political power". Braj Bhanu's statement can be read further than simplistic interpretations; one factor that might have influenced the visits from the foreign artist might have been to legitimize the rule of the Seraikela royalty, who were allies of the British.19

The effects of these early global influences can be seen during the 1970s. Sharon Lowen, a leading foreign national arrived in India in 1973 from United States, with Masters Degree in dance from the University of Michigan. A Fulbright Scholar, she decided to continue her studies of Manipuri and learn Odissi and Chhau. Lowen has now made her India her home has had an immense impact on Chhau and has promoted its inclusion in arts education, both at national and international levels. She is responsible for introducing Mayurbhanj Chhau to the United States at the 1978 Asian Dance Festival in Hawaii and later at the Olympic Arts Festival of Masks in Los Angeles and also its presentation on Indian national television broadcasts.

Sharon Lowen has been responsible in making Chhau popular in the West, which is making a difference in the awareness of the local history in the regions of Seraikela. Tapan Kumar Patnaik, the director of the Chhau dance center at Seraikela talked about this influence,

International artists have had a deep influence in local regions, as they are instrumental in getting support from the government but also from women of the surrounding region of Seraikela. Many women of the local region

19 A manuscript published in the 1870s give testimony to the extension of support towards the British by the rulers of Seraikela. The rulers of Seraikela gave sanction to the British rule that undertook repressive actions to crush revolt of the indigenous soldiers of the British army during the first war of Independence in 1857.
feel that it is their duty to preserve this indigenous form that has such
a wide appeal in the West. (Personal interview)

The influence of the West can be further seen as Sharon Lowen acknowledges the fact
that it was her Western training as a Ballet dancer, which allowed her to study the difficult
martial art techniques of Chhau. She remarks,

(The) mix of virile strength and elastic softness had a strong connection
to the dance movement of Western modern dance in which I had trained
since a child. I do not believe it would have been possible for me to learn
Chhau without having already acquired the strength, flexibility and
control necessary through hard years of training in Western modern dance.

(Lowen 103)

We can thus clearly see the local and global connections made to Chhau, which creates
its own uniqueness and help to create awareness in gender equality. Donna Haraway talks about
global- local connections that help to create gender equality. She remarks,

There is always a very thin …a very fine line between
appropriation of another's (never innocent) experience and the delicate
constructions of the just- barely possible affinities; connections might
actually make difference in the local and global histories. (113)

Outside influences can have a strong impact on insiders. Tradition is revived and is
established by the organizational support of outsiders. Once the outsiders establish this support,
community representatives can be convinced that the project is worthwhile. It becomes almost
an endorsement and an external validation of indigenous, traditional forms. This can be seen by
the motivation of the women of Seraikela to learn the form after the visits of the foreign artists
like Saron Lowen and Ilaina Chattirasi.

Validation can be two sided and sometimes outsiders need the substantiation of the insiders for affirmation. Sharon Lowen recalls one such incident:

The 1978 Asian Dance Festival- Hawaii organized by the American Dance Guild and conference on research in dance, marked both my first American Chhau performance and the first introduction of Mayurbhanj Chhau to U.S.A. While my traditional (dance) impressed the audience…(however an) knowledgeable Indian dance scholar…refused to believe it could be traditional till such time that (some Indian dance scholars present) confirmed that it was (one)… It also brought home to me the difficulty of substantiating the integrity and authenticity of my work of skeptics without depending on colleagues for affirmation.

(Lowen 106)

The need for insider approval or community participation is important to validate the outsiders. The role of community participation or the role of insiders therefore takes on different levels of meanings. According to a popular magazine, India Today, the lure "of foreign travel and fame" becomes the motivating factor to mobilize women to Chhau. According to Jarina Barik in an interview in India Today, “For a girl from Baripada Chhau is a passport. When women can go and fight in real war these days, what prevents us being a part of a mock war? In a way we are the foot soldiers of feminism” (India Today). Chhau therefore clearly is creating a strong social awareness in the regions of Seraikela and Mayurbnahj. Rudra Naryana Das remarked in the interview to India today, “It’s as if a revolution is going on here." Participation in Chhau thus is causing a cultural radicalism for India.
Many projects undertaken by the local level Chhau organizers have created community awareness and have furthered social revolution. One such project is for grassroots mobilization for social and political awareness. The state government of Jharkand funded a major project to mobilize and spread awareness on health through Chhau. Chhau has been used as a tool to mobilize the people of the local regions of Jharkand to spread Polio awareness and to urge the people to use vaccines through dramatized narratives and short performances.

Chhau has also been introduced as a part of the curriculum in Utkal University, Bhubaneswar, and the capital of Orissa. This has raised the prestige of Chhau from an indigenous rural folk form to a recognized traditional form that requires training at University levels. Introduction and extension of Chhau has met with encouraging responses. Sharon Lowen recalls this enthusiasm that was shared by some of her students,

Introducing Chhau training to students outside the tradition has received some encouraging response. As a visiting professor at Sarojini Naidu School of performing and visual arts, Hyderabad I found the greatest enthusiasm among the theater students. While the classically trained dance students do enjoy an introductory exposure to understanding Chhau, the directing and acting students are keenly motivated to explore the use of Chhau in drama. (Lowen 108)

The introduction of a local rural grassroots folk form into a part of the urban elite education has caused created cultural radicalism for India, and has motivated many women and men from larger cosmopolitan areas to learn this form, and it therefore creates a new pan Indian identity for

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20 Some political parties in West Bengal have used Chhau as tool for political propaganda. Chhau has been used to gain electoral votes through performances of Chhau using political themes as a tool of mobilization and winning support. In the middle of a show party leaders deliver their speeches.
a woman of India in postcolonial global India. The Newstime magazine records in 1998, of college going students like Abhipsa Mishra (a medical student), Sumitra Nayak, a graduate level graduate student, Banishree Misra, Trupti Barik, Madhumita Das and many others who joined training under Turi Babu, the Coordinator of Mayurbhanj Chhau, to participate and train in the Dance.

Such interaction between the international artist and indigenous people is therefore placed in a postcolonial global context. The influences are not just solely translocal but are also an extension of a cultural process of interactions between postcolonial India and the global community. This cultural process in postcolonial India gives rise to a new order with new ideas and innovations. According to Vina Majumdar,

Feminism is transforming…and releasing women's creativity in many ways. This leads to new insights about social structures and social relations -visions of a new world and of new concepts of personhood for women, man and children of that world. (259)

Women's participation in Chhau therfore creates a new vision for the Indian woman that can be seen choreographies of Chhau by women as both choreographers and dancers. A newspaper reports a female performer, Shagun Bhutani, choreographing new pieces based on older forms. According to Shagun Bhutani,

It's important to compromise with tradition and change it to make it more viable. After all you go to any dance performance and you will see the same old crowd. There are hardly any young people there.

At the same time Shaguna realizes the implications of this modernization of the form. She further remarks," I dare not take the Masks of God back to Seraikela…it is something that they
won't like". The Masks of God has been created as an extension of older forms based on mythology. As the older forms did not have the inclusion of women, we can see that women now are creating new pieces that are opening new doors for them. Manisha Bhargava, a female dancer who danced at the Monaco Dance Forum in 2000 in France as the only performer of traditional Indian dance, remarked in an interview to the newspaper Hindu,

To participate in a dance event of such immense proportions was an enriching experience. With absolutely no government sponsorship or aid, it was financially pretty taxing, but at the same time essential, for I showcased Mayurbhanj Chhau, a magnificent form relatively lesser known mainly due to a lack of exposure and talent. (Hindu)

Feminism not only means transformation, but also has to be seen as extension of old structures into new models. Manisha participation in an international festival despite not having any sponsorship proves the quest for women to create a new vista for Chhau despite economic strain. The role of the internal as well as the international support needs to be redefined and the questions of "we" in feminism thus need to be renamed. According to Foucault,

The problem is [...] to decide if it is actually suitable to place oneself within a 'we' in order to assert the principles one recognizes and the values one accepts; or if it is not, rather, necessary, to make the future formation of a 'we' possible by elaborating the question. Because it seems to me that 'we' must not be previous to the question; it can only be the result- the necessarily temporary result- of the question as it is posed in the new terms in which one formulates it. (The Foucault Reader 385).
The participation of the *Chhau* performers in a postcolonial global context represents an imperfect world and a complex model. Gayatri Spivak recognizes intellectuals as being “transparent in the relay race for they merely report on the non represented subject and analyze (without analyzing) the workings of the unnamed Subject irreducibly presupposed by (power and desire)” (81). However, it would be incorrect to completely ignore the influences of the intellectuals, urban or international *Chhau* performers because they do not "merely report" but have been responsible in influencing translocal mobilization of women.

The translocal, governmental and international supports all provide a large context to motivate female performers to participate in *Chhau*. These influences help to create a pan Indian identity for a woman for postcolonial India who maintains the delicate balance between modernity and tradition. This balance can be seen among the *Chhau* performers who are maintaining their tradition by their direct participation in the form, domestic conjugality, preservation of community and kinship values and at the same time retaining their strong national identities by not mere “Westernization” but by adopting certain norms of "modern - liberated" women placed in a global context.
Conclusion

The Role of Insiders to Research

This research is not only an attempt to understand the self-determining presence of women in Chhau and to define their new pan Indian identity, but it is a testimony of a transformed social reality of India. This research clearly establishes the position of the marginalized group, namely the women, in postcolonial India. My role in this research is as a "relative" insider, an insider, as I am native of these regions and an outsider, as I am representing the western academia. My position as an insider allows me to easily distinguish local, global practices, and, therefore, certain symbolic signs and comments by the respondents could be easily identified by me.

However, at the same time, I was acutely aware of myself being representative of the international academic community, and, hence, I had to prevent the "outsider" in me from becoming the intruder. There is a strong need for an international group for indigenous scholars, as their training in western academic methodologies and disciplines will add uniqueness to indigenous research. According to Linda Tuhiwai Smith,

This burgeoning international community of indigenous scholars and researchers is talking more widely about indigenous researchers who are informed academically by critical and often feminist approaches to research, and who are grounded politically in specific indigenous contexts, histories, struggles and ideals. (Smith 4)

My position of being a relative insider made me have a special bond with the respondents. They wanted to know the "methods of negotiation" that I had used to within the patriarchal system of the region and enhance my career. They asked me the specifics of my
"process of coercion", my going abroad, staying away from my “duties” as a daughter in law and also continuing with my performance. These shared experiences gave me a unique insight to the context of my respondents. Sabitri Rai one of my respondents asked,

I am curious to know how you are challenging and negotiating with your patriarchal model and how you are staying away from your husband and family in America, neglecting your "duties" as a daughter in law and a wife to fulfill your career goals. (Personal interview)

I explained my process of negotiation to my respondents. I explained how I communicated with my family on daily basis and how I tried to be involved in my family as much as possible. I also explained that one way to explain the need to perform is by providing the family information on the value of performance, and the summaries of the plot could explain the larger issues of social awareness involved in performance to the family members.

I argue that the pan Indian identities of both my women respondents and myself is one that is in a state of transition or liminal phase (Turner 925) and we were placed in unspoken bonding or commune. This bonding gave me a special insider bonding that sometimes even the accompanying men or other male Chhau performers could not recognize. According to Turner, "the liminal group is a community or comity of comrades and not a structure of hierarchically arrayed positions. This comradeship transcends distinctions of race, age, kinship, position, and, in some kinds of cultic group, even of sex” (100). This liminality or the transitions of identities of women in postcolonial India arise due to several factors, self- awareness of individuals both men and women, aesthetic, political, social, cultural realizations of India's past and present, globalization and commercialization and creation of a global economy. This causes the transformation of women in India and the creation of a new identity. According to Turner,
The arcane knowledge or "gnosis" obtained in the liminal period is felt to change the inmost nature of the neophyte, impressing him, as a seal impresses wax, with the characteristics of his new state. It is not a mere acquisition of knowledge, but a change in being. (Turner 102)

The gnosis or the multiple reasons that influence the creation of the pan-Indian identity, hence impresses the women, or the neophytes to change their beings or consciousness'. I was also aware of ensuring that this research reaches the people who have made it happen. In order to reciprocate a group of Chhau artists (men and women) were invited by the department of Theater at Miami University for a series of lecture-demonstrations in April 2004. Unfortunately, the project could not reach its conclusion as bureaucratic protocols and governmental policies of Visa regulations came in its way of conclusion. This makes the insider role to research even more pivotal. It is necessary for both national government of India and international governments to work with indigenous scholars so that a promotion of arts can take place without placing heavy emphasis on visa policies and international regulations, that may some times thwart attempts to share knowledge and data base between insiders and outsiders. However, as an attempt to share the knowledge from this research, one part of the thesis was read at the Cherly. B. Evans Multicultural Conference at Miami University during April 2004. On the future, I wish to use the data from the field and use them to create a performance piece that will address issues of gender, sexuality, customs and traditions of postcolonial India. I wish to create an original performance piece addressing the issues of gender and patriarchy that also have an influence on creative arts. I want to specifically look at issues of women in performances as actors, technicians and creators and discuss their hopes and aspirations that make them generate
their own models that can challenge patriarchal authorities in creative and aesthetic art forms of postcolonial India.

The participation of women in *Chhau* therefore creates a new spatial identity for Indian women. The performance of women in *Chhau* as not only actors but also choreographers, teachers, mask makers and troupe leaders is indicative of a radical transformation in *Chhau* but also of the social, cultural, aesthetic foundations of postcolonial global India. Thus, a cultural revivalism is giving a new orientation to *Chhau* that gives the old traditional art form a new identity marker.

Therefore, the presence of the women in *Chhau* is a definition of the metaphysical, cultural social and political space of postcolonial global India. This over-riding presence of women in an all male form, shows not only revisions in gender roles in performance arts of India, but also resistance to strict gender norms, derived from an altering self-consciousness of women. The altering of self-awareness of a woman the metaphysical space, in *Chhau* is created due to external spatial contexts. This spatial interaction between individual selves and others creates gender fluidity in postcolonial global India. The interactions are within social constructions existing in the social spaces, i.e. between one self and ones families, communities, religions and kin groups.

Resistance to these external social spaces is maintained or revised through various methods and processes of negotiation and coercion. These negotiations create in a "new" identity for an Indian woman in a postcolonial Indian nation. This interaction between the selves and others forms a pan- Indian identity, which is unique to the postcolonial global Indian context. The interaction between the selves and others create a new awareness or change in knowledge and causes a liminal reality for Indian women. In this liminal reality, the women are constantly
transforming and recreating their tradition, by being intrinsically modern and liberated and at the same time having deep traditional values that are truly Indian. The liminal reality of Indian women can be best described as a pan Indian identity, which creates new spatial metaphors demonstrated in the participation of women in *Chhau*, an all male art form. Conclusively, this participation of women in *Chhau*, therefore, causes transformation in the aesthetic, social, cultural, political reality of India, and opens up yet another social construction for postcolonial global India.
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Appendix II

District Map of Orissa

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Appendix III

Detailed Map of Mayurbhanj District (Orissa)
Appendix IV

District Map of Jharkhand
Appendix V

Biographies of Artists of Chhau

Males:

1. Prince Braj Bhanu Singh Deo
   Age: 48
   Actor, Choreographer, Troupe leader
   Region: Seraikela

2. Turi Babu (L. N. Das)
   Age: Mid 60s
   Coordinator, Mayurbhanj Chhau
   Region: Baripada

3. Brijesh Kumar (pseudonym)
   Age: 24
   Actor
   Region: Seraikela

4. Hari Shankar (pseudonym)
   Age: 29
   Actor
   Region: Seraikela

5. Guru Tapan Kumar Patnaik
   Age: Mid 40s
   Director, Government Chhau Dance Center
   Region: Seraikela

6. B.K. Sahu
   Age: Mid 40s
   Asst. Director, Government Chhau Dance Center
   Region: Seraikela

7. S.K. Pani
   Age: 46
   Instrumentalist (Drummer)
   Government Chhau Dance Center
   Region: Seraikela

8. K.C Bhal
   Age: Mid 60s
9. Guru Shrihari Nakay  
   Age: late 60s  
   Troupe leader, Uttarsahi  
   Region: Baripada

10. Sanjay Kumar (pseudonym)  
    Age: 34  
    Actor  
    Region: Baripada

11. Pradip Sahu (pseudonym)  
    Age: 32  
    Actor  
    Region: Baripada

12. Vinay Kumar Gupta  
    Age: 26  
    Translator and Coordinator  
    Region: Jamshedpur

13. Narendra Kumar  
    Age: 35  
    Actor  
    Region: New Delhi

14. V. N. Misra (pseudonym)  
    Age: Early 40s  
    Mask Maker  
    Region: Seraikela

15. Guru Laxmi Naryanan Das  
    Age: mid 60s  
    Troupe leader and teacher  
    Region: Baripada

Females

16. Manisha Bhargava  
    Age: not known
17. Sabitri Rai  
   Age: 26  
   Actor  
   Region: Baripada

18. Arundhati Nayak  
   Age: 25  
   Actor  
   Region: Baripada

19. Sumitra Nayak  
   Age: 17  
   Actor  
   Region: Baripada

20. Tripti Bari  
   Age: 24  
   Actor  
   Region: Baripada

21. Shagun Bhutani  
   Age: not known  
   Actor, Choreographer  
   Region: Not known

22. Sharon Lowen  
   Age: Mid 50s  
   Actor, Choreographer  
   Region: New Delhi

23. Manushree Das (pseudonym)  
   Age: 20  
   Actor  
   Region: Seraikela

24. Bhagyashree Patniak (pseudonym)  
   Age: 17  
   Actor  
   Region: Seraikela

25. Aarti Misra (pseudonym)  
   Age: 23  
   Mask maker
Region: Seraikela

26. Raka Maitra
   Age: not known
   Actor, Choreographer
   Region: not known

27. Ruchi Jain (pseudonym)
   Age: 16
   Actor
   Region: Seraikela
Appendix VI

Detailed List of Questions Asked during Field Interviews

Several questions were asked the respondents during informal interviews that served a guide, they included:

1. What is your name?
2. What is your age?
3. What is your education in?
4. How long have you been learning Chhau?
5. What were the reasons that you are learning this form?
6. Is the performance of Chhau a part of your family tradition?
7. How many siblings do you have? Are they involved in Chhau as performers?
8. What language do you speak at home?
9. What is your caste/community or religious affiliations?
10. Will you encourage your children to learn Chhau, especially your daughters?
11. Have you faced any social humiliation as a female performer of Chhau?
12. Have you won any awards?
13. Do you get any Government stipends or scholarships?
14. Have you participated in any youth festivals at regional, national or international levels?
15. Do you like the changes that are being incorporated into Chhau and the fact that new forms are being introduced to Chhau?
16. How do you view the participation of foreigners, especially women in Chhau?
17. Do you take part in the Chaitra Parva, the religion associated with Chhau?
18. Do you think that international artists are in any ways corrupting the traditional methods?
19. Do you want to get married to another Chhau artist?
20. How do you balance your household duties as a wife and a mother with your career?
21. Who looks after your children when you go to your rehearsals or performances?
22. Do you get enough respect from your male colleagues and teachers?
23. Do you get respect in larger cosmopolitan cities and if not why?
24. What performance roles have you played?
25. Do you get the chance to play the roles of the male gender?
26. Have you played female roles?
27. Can you handle the techniques of Chhau or do you feel that it is a strain and physically vigorous?
28. Do you get any separate facilities when you travel to national dance festivals?
29. How do you prepare yourself for the role that you have to play?
30. Do you read the script before accepting the role?
31. Are there any roles that you always wanted to play?
32. Is there any technique that you always wanted to master?
33. Do you find that you had to make any major adjustments when you changed the region of your career from Baripada to Bhuvaneshwar?
34. Do you have nay mentors that you would like to mention and why?
35. What steps does the Government need to take to promote Chhau?
36. What facilities would you like to be given to your Chhau dance center?
37. Do you get paid when you perform in the Chaitra parva?
38. Why do you think that women leave their careers after their marriages?
39. Why does the Government refrain from giving scholarships to women learning Chhau?
40. Does this form have any class/ caste/ religious divisions?
41. How is the royalty of Seraikela promoting Chhau?
42. Would you like to see the royalty become the traditional patrons once again?
43. What is still being retained in the palace that is strongly associated with Chhau?
44. Would you encourage the women of the Royal family of Seraikela to perform in this art form?
45. What steps would you/ have you taken to promote Chhau on a personal level?
46. Would you describe Chhau as being a folk form, why/ why not?
47. What are the similarities/ dissimilarities between Chhau and other forms?
48. Do you see your region as being rural/ local/ urban/ translocal?
49. In what areas of Chhau you feel that women in particularly need to strengthen their skills?
50. Are there any specific performance pieces that are enjoyed by the audiences?
51. Is there any new choreography that has been enjoyed by the audiences of your region?
Appendix VII

Notes on
Government Chhau Dance Center ( Seraikela)

I visited the Government Chhau Dance Center, now running under the Ministry of Jharkhand between 11 to 20th June 2003. The students are giving training in the techniques of Chhau besides teaching them mask making. As this is an undertaking of the Government of Jharkhand, instruction is free. The staff at present consists of three instrumentalists, two instructors and the director and the Assistant Director. The total strength of the school is about 150 students out of which about 50 girls between the ages of 10-21 are learning Chhau. After being administered for several years in make shift building, now the center has its own independent building with a mini open-air auditorium. This center is making good progress in promoting and popularizing Chhau in the surrounding regions of Seraikela.