Carved out of Bihar in 2000, many treasures of the relatively new state of Jharkhand, situated in the Chota Nagpur Plateau, is still a mystery to many. Nature wears her most splendid clothes in this state: many rivers like the Damodar, Brahmani, Kharkai and the Subarnarekha flow gently, adding to the natural charm of Jharkhand, hill streams bubbling like a young adivasi's laughter. Here, one can hear the sound of silence and taste the elegance of nature. The state is endowed with abundant mineral wealth, flora and fauna. The many tribes inhabiting this part of the country are scattered and spread all over the state. Jharkhand has proudly emerged culturally as an important multi-ethnic state. Over thirty indigenous communities exist harmoniously in Jharkhand. Some of the major tribes are the Santhals, Oraons, Mundas, Kharias, Hos and Cheros. Rich in culture and traditions, these communities have several colourful festivals. As the tribal communities gave up their gypsy life styles, they began clearing forests for settlements. The journey of their life is reflected in the rhythm of the different tribal and folk dances of the state.
Paika

The Munda, Ho and Oraon communities of Jharkhand perform the Paika Dance. This dance is a stylized representation of the rituals connected with the preparations of war. The dancers hold bows, arrows, spears, swords and shields and the dance is, in fact, a stylized worship of arms. The martial character of the dance is retained by the use of the shield and sword. The dancers display their skills in handling the sword and shield and the dance reaches a climax with the fast beat of the Madal. Previously the dance was performed to welcome guests, but nowadays it is also performed on occasions like weddings. The Dussehra celebrations remain incomplete without this dance. The musical accompaniments of the Paika Dance are the Dhol, Nagara, Shehnai and Ranbheri.

The Mundas originally came from North West India, but later moved to the Chota Nagpur Plateau. They began their settlements here by clearing forests, and were the first tribal people to resist colonization. The Paika Dance of the Mundas symbolises the great war of their community against the British. Besides their protective chest blades, the dancers also wear colourful headgear, bright waistbands signifying valour, and bells around their ankles, as part of their elaborate costumes. This captivating dance, which is indigenous to the Mundas, is a martial art form with variations throughout Jharkhand, and is an expression of the deep sense of love and patriotism the warrior dancers feel for their motherland.
**Taal Vadya**

Taal Vadya is an orchestra presentation using indigenous folk instruments. It is usually performed at the commencement of a dance presentation, so as to invite the villagers to the performance area. A variety of interesting rhythms are played to create the mood for celebration and festivity.

**Tribal Dances**

The Adivasis of Jharkhand (Mundas, Santhals and Oraons) are born dancers and singers. Their songs and music are joyous and depict the festive spirit that prevail whenever there is an occasion for people to get together. The indigenous musical instruments and the traditional tribal costumes and jewellery worn by the dancers add to the beauty and exotica of the dance.
Hunta Dance

The Hunting Dance of the Santhals who live in the hilly plateaus of the Chota Nagpur region of the Santhal Parganas of Jharkhand is known as the Hunta Dance. This powerful dance requires a lot of strength and vigour and is performed only by men. The dance depicts the act of preparing for the hunt with bows and arrows, stalking the animal and finally killing it. Mime, slow, strong stepping and measured movements are the distinctive features of this ancient tribal dance.
Barao Dance

The richness and variety of the Barao Dance and music is remarkable. The Oraon community of the state, which is mainly concentrated in the Hazaribagh Gomla area, performs this dance. The high table land is thickly dotted with hills and hillocks. The Oraons call themselves "Kuruk". The ten-lakh strong Oraon population of Jharkhand has folk songs, folk dances, folk tales and some traditional musical instruments which are unique to them. Both men and women participate in these community dances. There are different songs and dances for different occasions and seasons. Every village has an akhada or performing area in which in the month of Baisakh (April-May) all groups of the village organize a jatra (folk theatre) or dance festival. The Barao dance is held during this month. The community offers prayers to Mother Earth for a plentiful monsoon, so that a good harvest season may follow. The richness and variety of these songs is remarkable.
**Mundari Dance**

The Mundari Dance is a very common and popular dance of the Mundaris. All members of the community can participate in this dance. This dance is generally performed to congratulate newly weds. Munda songs are often mixed with songs of other tribal languages in such a way that only rarely can one identify the pure Munda elements in their songs. Munda phrases and idioms, when properly decoded, are as thrilling as any scientific discovery. The remarkable similarity between Munda songs and dances and those of other constituent tribal groups in the culture of Jharkhand, lies in this form of group dancing, performed with the swinging of the dancers' bodies with especially expressive mudras or gestural language. The movements of the dance are very repetitive: the dancers move forward a few steps and then retrace their steps.
Jitia Karam

Karam is the Oraon’s name for the Kadamb tree, which the Oraons consider very sacred. They worship the Kadamb tree as a deity. The Oraons use the Kadamb flowers and twigs as decorations. High pitched sounds and the rhythms of the dance touch the hearts of the people of Jharkhand. Through those songs and dances they celebrate their deep and life-long attachment to the forest, which itself appears to them as a deity. Performed in reverence to vagaries of Fortune, with a branch from the Karma tree held in their hands, this is a vibrant dance that displays attractive choreography.
Jenana Jhumur

The Santhal and Nagpuri communities mainly perform the Jhumur songs and dances of Jharkhand. The Jenana Jhumur Dance is a traditional dance of the women of the Jharkhand region performed mainly during the period of cultivation in the rainy season. This is the time of the year when every member of the tribal community is hopeful of a good harvest. In this hour of joy and expectations, that villagers of the Nagpuri community remember the dark days that they have just overcome. Even so, this beautiful dance form is performed throughout the year, to mark all happy occasions and festivities.

Mardani Jhumur

The men of the Nagpuri community and Southern cultures perform the Mardani Jhumur dance after the harvest. The musical accompaniments include the Shenai, Dhol, Kara, Nakara, Jhanj and Kartal. Like the Paika Dance, the Mardani Jhumur Dance is also a semi-martial art form. The dance movements and the accompanying music are martial in character and the mood of the dance is that of Veera (valour). Occasionally one or two female dancers known as nachnis join in this dance with the men. Though there is no fixed time for this dance, it is usually performed during the harvesting of crops.
**Lahasuya**

The Lahasuya songs and dances accompanied by rhythmic beats of the Madol, is a call for rain, if there is a drought. Both men and women participate in this dance.

**Jhitka & Danga**

Both men and women perform the Jhitka and Danga dances. The dances celebrate different feudal traditions. They are spontaneous expressions of joy and happiness and combine elements of reality and fantasy. The costume and headgear worn by the dancers is similar to that of the Paika dancers.
**Domkach**

The Domkach is a distinctive folk dance of the Chotanagpur area of Jharkhand. The women of the bridegroom’s family perform this ceremonial dance after his baraat has left for the bride’s house. Since most men have left with the baraat, the women are on their own at home. Through this dance, they keep themselves awake and entertained. Moving in circles, they poke fun at each other and crack jokes through their satiric songs.

**Ghora Naach**

This dance is performed during wedding ceremonies - men wear loose horse puppets around their waists and dance to the rhythms of indigenous folk instruments.

**Nachni**

Nachni is the performer or court dancer in the tradition of the prosperous zamindars of villages, and flourished under their patronage. The Nachnis belong to the Kurmi community and usually perform on Kartik Purnima (the full moon night in the month of Kartik).
Seraikella Chhau

The Seraikella Chhau is one of the three Chhau dance forms prevailing in Eastern India, in the states of West Bengal, Orissa and Jharkhand. This martial arts-based dance form incorporates the Veera Rasa of the Indian dramatic spectrum. The Seraikella Chhau Dance is an art form that combines popular appeal with sophistication. The nature of the themes is similar to those of the classical dance forms, but it has permeated the rank and file of the people. The dances are usually vigorous, and many dances illustrate the stories from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata other dances depict the moods of animals and their movements, bringing alive the daily lives of the people.
Kharsawan Chhau

The Kharsawan Chhau Dance of Jharkhand is performed without the use of masks, unlike the Seraikhetla Chhau. The performers paint their faces and bodies in order to depict different characters. This dramatic dance form incorporates acting and different stories from the epics and the Krishna legends.