**60th World Congress of Dance Research**

**Athens, 5-9 July 2023**

Title of the Presentation: **Women’s Innovations in the Performing Art Tradition of Purulia *Chhau***

Presenter: **Maheshwar Kumar**, PhD Research Scholar at National Institute of Science Education and Research (NISER) Bhubaneswar, an OCC of Homi Bhabha National Institute (HBNI), India

International Dance Council Registration Number: **35454**

Type of Presentation: **Research Report (Paper)**

**Abstract:**

Traditionally, Purulia *Chhau*, a martial, tribal, folk, masked dance-drama form of Eastern India, has witnessed the sheer dominance of male performers. Even the performances of women were played by men only. But, in the last decade of the 21st century, this performing arts genealogy has seen convergences of manifold innovations in women’s performance in Purulia *Chhau* repertoire across time and space. Currently, these women as dancers, storytellers, and performance artists have overlooked the existing social hierarchies and created their own female *Chhau* troupes that appear in public within an audienced context. Their innovations are defined by breaking from established conventions and establishing a strong influence in the development of this folk dance. Referring to the social and cultural perspectives and employing a qualitative approach as the primary methodological tool, the present study uncovers the new historiographies of women’s performances in Purulia *Chhau*. To address various innovations in *Chhau* movements, repertoires, and social experimentations, this study is supplemented by the insights obtained through case studies of individuals of local female *Chhau* dancers and documenting and analyzing their performances.

**Keywords:** Women’s Innovations, Women Performers, Women Leadership, Purulia *Chhau*

**Author Biography:**

**Maheshwar Kumar** is a PhD Scholar in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at the National Institute of Science Education and Research (NISER) Bhubaneswar, an OCC of Homi Bhabha National Institute (HBNI), India. His research areas include Indian Folk Theatre and Performance Studies. He has published papers in reputed international journals. His primary areas of interest are English Literature, Women’s Studies, Cultural Studies, and South Asian Studies.

**Email:** maheshwar.kumar@niser.ac.in

**ORCID id:** <https://orcid.org/my-orcid?orcid=0000-0003-2614-112X>