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The indigenous people of Purulia say - *Senge Jujung, Kajigo Durung* - We dance as we walk and sing as we speak. Indeed, this area has a rich heritage of rural and tribal folk song, dance and drama. Chau is a vigorous form of mask dance and drama popular in the Chotonagpur area in Eastern India. Style, elegance and strong visual presentations of this dance form make it a marvel to watch. The masks are made by skilled craftsmen in a hamlet called Charida. They are wonderful works of art.

The Eastern Zonal Cultural Centre under the Ministry of Culture, Government of India, has taken up a unique and ambitious initiative of reviving and revitalizing performing folk art forms as means of sustainable livelihood. The Departments of Panchayat and Rural Development and Information and Cultural Affairs of the Government of West Bengal are also partners in this initiative. 1200 Chau artists of Barabazar, Balarampur, Joypur, Jhalda, Baghmundi, Purulia, Arsha, Bandwan areas of Purulia have come forward to form 74 self help groups (SHGs). Skill development programmes have been held under Chau Gurus as well as contemporary theatre specialists.



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Preserving tradition is important, but innovation and responding to change are critical for sustainability of art. The Chau artists of Purulia have even trans-created Tagore's songs and dance drama sequences in their unique style. Productions are of shorter duration. Masks and costumes have been redesigned to make productions cost effective. Ministry of Panchayat is also supporting the folk artists to establish Rural Business Hubs in Balarampur and Jhalda- II blocks.

Today the folk artists have embarked upon a new journey. These poorest of poor people have found a new means for livelihood. They need your support and patronage. Their performance holds the promise of making your cultural programme memorable - be it at a tourist resort, school or college fest, or a function at office, club or in your locality.



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Repertoire

- Mahishasuramardini** - Story of Goddess Durga
- Tagore's **Kalmrigaya** and **Chitranganda** in Chhau form
- Taraka Vadh** - Story of how Rama and Laxmana warded off demoness Taraka, sister of demon King Ravana
- Lav Kush** - Story of Rama's first meeting with his twin sons
- Ghatotkacha Sambhav** - Love story of Bhima and demon princess Hirimba
- Avimanyu Vadh** - Killing of Arjuna's young son in the Kurukshetra battlefield by seven stalwarts
- Usha-Aniruddha** - Story of worshipping of Goddess Manasa
- Khamar Murar Amar** Katha capturing story of the local legend.
- Surath Rajar Sandhi Puja** - Story of worshipping of Goddess Durga by King Surath
- Laxmaner Saktishel** - Sukumar Ray's comedy in Chau form
- Kirat Arjun** - Story of Arjuna and Shiva in the guise of a hunter.

