

Name of the Element: Rathwa ni Gher: Tribal Dance of Rathwas, Gujarat, India

Community: Rathwa tribe.

Region: Chota Udepur, Kanwant and Pavijetpur talukas (sub divisions) of the Vadodara district, and Jambughoda, Narukot, and Ghoghamba talukas (sub divisions) of Panchmahal district of the southeastern parts of the state of Gujarat, India.

Brief Description: The Rathwas, who dwell in Rath-Vistar, the hilly area of the southeastern part of Gujarat state, perform the Rathwa ni Gher dance on the occasion of Holi (festival of colours) also known as Kavant festival, named after the place where the Holi carnival takes place. The Gher (dance with music) performances begin on Dhulendi, which is, literally, 'the day of flying coloured dust'. This is the day when people smear each other with colour powder. The festivities last for five days during which the Rathwas observe fast and abstain from sleeping on cots, washing clothes and bathing. Both men and women perform the Gher together, in groups of 20 to 25.

The entire village community and people from neighbouring areas participate in the festivities. Of all Rathwa dances performed on various occasions linked with the cycle of seasons, Rathwa ni Gher stands out as exquisite, colourful and spectacular. The intricate make-up, the synchronised footsteps, vigorous whirling of the dancers and the mesmerizing symphony created through indigenous musical instruments show how antique and refined the dance form is it constitutes the Rathwas' creative expression of their religiosity cultural identity and understanding of the nature.