

MEET ME AT THE AKHRA

"Sen gi munu, kafi gi dhang"

"सेन गी मुनुन, काफ़ी गी डुंग"

(to walk is to dance, to speak is to sing)

A saying from my people—the Mundas—who live in the hills and forests of Chotanagpur region in eastern India. It reminds us that every step, every word, is filled with dance and song. And through this, we pass on our stories.

In the Mundari languages, dance is *डुंगरा* (du-sun), and song is *डुंगरा* (du-rang).

डुंगरा holds knowledge. It tells us about the earth, the seasons and the people. It is a living library passed down through generations—not written on paper, but carried in our voices.

डुंगरा is how we read and feel this knowledge. And *डुंगरा* (the akhra)—the open space at the center of our villages—is where this happens.

डुंगरा *रे* (in the akhra), we don't just hear stories, we live them. Through dance, we connect with the wisdom held in song and bring it into the present moment. This is how knowledge flows in our community—through sound and movement, through shared experiences.

After a long day of work in the fields or forest, everyone gathers. Mothers carry their babies on their backs as they dance, teaching the next generation without words. Elders guide the steps and rhythms, making sure the stories stay alive and true.



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Our songs and dances mark the cycle of the seasons—planting, harvest, rain, and sun. They hold the answers to questions about how to live in balance with nature and each other. They help us understand sorrow and find healing.

But today, our akhras are disappearing—erased by land loss, migration, and development. With them, we risk losing an entire knowledge system, a way of life, a way of being.

So I invite you to meet me *डुंगरा* *रे* in this akhra—a reimaged space where communal and embodied knowledge lives on through digital tools. This digital akhra attempts to offer a space to return, reconnect, and re-attune to an indigenous way of knowing.

You don't have to be from here to belong. Just bring your body, your curiosity, and your heart. Let the songs teach you. Let the dance help you feel. Because here, to sing is to know, and to dance is to understand.

How to use this:

Use your phone to scan the QR code. Step into the Akhra. Feel the rhythm. Join the dance. Once you get the hang of it, invite others to join and lead the dance, handkerchief swaying with the song and each other.

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