

# Odissi Music: As Classical as Odissi Dance

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**Abstract:** Odisha, the land of Lord Jagannath is bestowed with a lot of culture and tradition. The indigenous Culture and tradition of Odisha are unique having several idiosyncratic characteristic features. Music and Dance are the most important parts of Odishan culture and tradition. Odissi Music and Dance carved their special niche in the field of performing arts of Odisha. Odissi music is one of the most ancient classical music of Bharat (India) which has been mentioned in the Natya Shastra of Bharat Muni, the most prestigious and widely followed treatise on Bharatiya (Indian) dance, music and drama. The Natya Shastra mentioned about four pravrittis like Avanti, Dakshinatyā, Panchali and Odramagadhi (or Udrāmagadhi). The pravritti of Odramagadhi (or Udrāmagadhi) refers to the classical music prevailed in the region of Udra or Odra (presently Odisha). The different aspects of Odissi classical music can be classified into rāgāṅga, bhābāṅga, nātyāṅga and dhruvapadāṅga which can be presented through different compositions of Odissi prabandha, chaupadi, chhānda, champu, chautisā, janāna, mālasri etc. in different unique rāgas. It has different tālas like Ekātālī, Khematā, Tripatā, Jhampā, ādatālī etc. The present study of classical nature and uniqueness of Odissi Music concluded that the Odissi Music is as classical as Odissi Dance of Odisha.

**Keywords:** Odissi Classical Music, Mardala, Classical Music, Odramagadhior Udrāmagadhi

## 1. Introduction

The fundamental theory of Indian Classical Music is grounded in the theory of *NādaBrahma* or *Shabda Brahma* and is thus linked with Vedic Religion. *Bharat Muni's Nātyashāstra* is based on Vedic concepts. It is the mother text of all the branches of Indian Art and poetics. Bharat applies the same sets of rules to the triple arts of song, dance & drama. It is said, "*Nrutyam Vādyānuragam Proktah Vādyam Gītānubruttī Cha*" (13<sup>th</sup> century A.D., *Sangeet Ratnakar, Pt. Sarang Dev*). It means the dance will follow the *Vādyā* and the *Vādyā* will follow the song. Hence, if we place in order, *Gīta* or Song is the base and then comes music (instruments) followed by dance. Accordingly, if Odissi dance be classical we do not find any reason as to why Odissi music cannot be classical. Moreover, Odissi Music has a distinctive style of singing or Gayaki with special Raga & Tala. Music is the soul of dance. If Odissi Dance as a classical dance form could be the body then Odissi Music as the soul should undoubtedly be *Shāstriya (Classical)*. Further, we should consider the *Mardala*, the percussion instrument, an inevitable and special to *Odissi Music & Dance* also should get the classical status because its feds entirely as the main accompanying percussion both to the *Odissi Music & Dance*.

## 2. Methods

The present study followed the method of literature survey from books, articles, research papers and expert opinions from exponents of Odissi Music, art critics and researchers.

### Distinctiveness of Odissi Music

The rich tradition of *Odissi* music synchronized with literary, sculptural and inscriptional evidences has established its own identity and carved a niche in the realm of Indian musical tradition. *Odissi* music is the expression of deep-felt emotions of the life and thought of the people of Orissa. Its

present theory and practice are the logical development of a consistent process, a process which has been distinctive and which is an integral part of *Orissan* history & culture. The three vital components of any classical music are tradition (*Parampara*), codification (*Pabidhi*) and application (*Prayaog*), which Odissi music embodies in its fullest sense. The pace of Odissi music with its vibrated tune or melody called *Gamaka* emanates a flavour, which depicts its special entity. On account of musical elaboration *Odissi Prabandha* is divided into several categories like in Hindustani music; *Dhrupad, Khayal, Thumuri, Tarana, Tappa, kajari, Chaiti, Geet, Gazal* and *Bhajan* etc. They are;

- *Dhruvapadāṅga* (Devotional Lyrics Follow different *Layakriyās* set to *Raag* and *Tāal*)
- *Rāgāṅga* (Follows all applications & principles of *Rāgas*)
- *Bhābāṅga* (*Bhāba* Main and *Rāga* Secondary)
- *Nātyāṅga* (*Tāla* & *Chhānda*-Main- *Rāga* & *Bhāba* Secondary)
- *Champu* (*Manushi Mātrūkā Prabandha* traditional composition with *Rāag* and *Tāal*)
- *Chhānda* (*Pāñchali Prabandha* traditional composition with *Britt* and *Tāal*)
- *Chautishā* (*Mānushi Mātrūka Pāñcali Prabandha* traditional composition with *Britt* and *Tāal*)
- *Geeta Govind* (Written by Poet *Shree Jayadev* traditional composition with *Rāag* and *Tāal*)
- *Bhajan and Janaana* (Devotional)
- *Pallavi* (*Swara* and *Vādyā*)
- Other rituals of *Shree jagannāth* Tradition Like *Jhulana, Chāpa* etc....

*Padi* is another specialty to *Odissi* music. It is an extra part of composition attached with *Antarā* which is sung comparatively in faster tempo with vibrations of different *tala*.

In view of *Odissi Gāyan* (Singing) *Bādan* (Playing of instruments) and *pradarsan* or *paribesan* (mode or style of

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presentation), Odissi music has three main characteristics. These are *āndolita Gati* (Vibrated move), *na Drutta and Na Bilambita* (neither faster nor slower) and *equal application of Bhāsā & Rāga* (Text & Raga) [1]. Odissi music is very subtle. It characterizes and distinguishes itself by the elements of spontaneous creativity and subtlety and embellishment of the ideation melody & rhythm with a vibrated move. Due to intensity of its pace and mood (Bhava) Odissi music is also called as *Sāma Sangita*. *Bhāsā* or Text and the Raga are the basis of the pace and characteristic. Text is the body of the Odissi song and *Bhāva* or mood is the soul. An elegant blend of text and mood (*Bhāva*) and proportionate musical chemistry of text and tune (*Swara*) are marked ostentatiously in Odissi music [2].

The mode of singing of Odissi music is determined by some *Gamakas*. The melodic movement is qualified with appropriate *Garmaka*. The vibrated tune of Odissi music in fact differentiates from other musical streams. It is a spontaneous creativity. Four *Gamakas* dominates the rendering of Odissi song like *Andolita- Sa-re-ga-ma...., Aahata- Sa> Re> Ga> Ma>...., Dhalu (Arohi Dhalu- Mapa Pani Nisa .... and AbarohaDhalu- Sani Nidha Dhapa....)* and *Ambredita- Nisaniresani, Gampamaga, Ragaremagare, Padhapasanidhapa*, etc.[3]

### 3. History and ancient records

The history of *Orissa's* (the then *Kalinga*) musical tradition goes back to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C as we have documentary records of histrionic arts (*Gāndharva Kalā* explicitly reflected in the rock edicts of *Hātigumpha* (elephant cave) of King *Mahā Megha Vāhāna Khāravela* on Udayagiri hill at Bhubaneswar.

It is mentioned in the *Hātigumpha* inscription; the English translation goes like this

“Thereafter in the third year, well-versed in the *Gāndharva Veda*, His majesty made *Kalinga nagari* play as it were, by arranging festivals and convivial gatherings and organizing performances of acrobatic dance as well as of vocal and instrumental music.”. Hence *Khāavela* stands as the earliest luminous personality known to be proficient in the *Gāndharva Veda* and having intense love for the music. The epigraphical statement is amply corroborated by sculptural evidences and we find in the caves of these hills’ lively scenes of music and dance enjoyed by the people along with the king and the queens. Subsequently we get literary references of Bharat Muni’s *Natyashastra* a treatise on music written in 2<sup>nd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> Century AD., in which he had mentioned four types of style of music & dancing.

“*Chaturbidha Prabuttischa Prokta Natya Prayoktuvi, Avanti Dakihinatya Cha Panchali Odramagadhi*”

Here we get a reference of *Odra Māgadhi* style of music & dancing which belongs to the then *Odra* or present *Orissa* [4].

The compositions of “*Charyā Gitikā*” or poems on Buddhist literature had been started by the Buddhist *Siddhacharyas* from 7<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> Century AD. These compositions had for the

first time followed certain *Ragas* some of which are still in practice either in its original name or changed name. It is believed that all the 12 *Ragas* used by Poet *Jayadev* in his immortal creation *Geeta Govinda* had already been applied much before him, most probably in the *Charyā Geetikā*. Hence the tradition of singing of Odissi music with *Rag* goes back much earlier [1].

*Odissi* music including *Geeta Govinda* has been an inevitable part in the daily rituals of Lord *Shri Jagannath* particularly at the time when *Lord Jagannath* goes to sleep. The *Geeta Govinda* had been introduced into the *Jagannath Temple* as an essential ritualistic element from the beginning of the reign of *Pratāprudradev* (AD 1497-1540) as is proved by his inscription on the *Jagannath Temple*.

*Pratāprudra* had made its singing by the female dancers in the presence of Lord *Jagannath* compulsory. Subsequently both for music and dancing services of different servants were categorized like.

- *Beenakar*-Plays *Veenā* before the deities go to sleep
- *Bhitar Gauni*- Sings songs at the time of *Pahuda* and at other festivals
- *Samprada Nijog*-Dancing girls who dance at the time of *Patuāra*
- *Madeli*-Plays *Madal* or *Mardala*

Though *Geeta Govinda* was mainly recited by the *Māharis* before *Jagannath, Jananas & Bhajanans* (devotional songs) were also being sung and other endemic instruments like *Jhanja, Kansal, Mardal, Beena and Kahali* were also being played by different servants.

The great Oriya musicologist and author of *Geeta Prakash Sri Krushnadas Badajena Mohapatra* had adorned the court of the Mughal King *Akbar* in the later part of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century. The famous writer & historian *Abul Fazal* in his book *Akbar Nama* has greatly admired the erudition of *Krushnadās Badajenā* [5].

In the later medieval period illustrious poets like *Kabi Samrat Upendra Bhanja* (1680-1720), *Kabi Banamali Das* (18<sup>th</sup> Century), *Abhimanyu Samat Singhar* (1757-1807), *Kabi Surya Baldev Rath* (1789-1845), *Gopalkrushna* (1784-1862) etc. had flourished the *Odissi* musical tradition by their enchanting melodious and ornamental compositions. Their compositions contain enormous references to romantic and emotively expressive forms of music and also devotional which embodies lyricism & delicacy.

A new era in the realm of *Odissi* music began with a colossus personality like *Kabichandra Kali Charan Pattnaik* (1897). His immortal contribution to the field of *Odissi* music dance and dramatics will act as a beacon light in the cultural scenario of *Orissa*. The other luminaries who have contributed immensely to the enrichment of *Odissi* music are *Acharya Tarini Charan Patra* (1901-1979), *Banikantha Nimain Charan Harichandan* (1901-1983), *Singhari Shyam Sundar Kar* (1908-1975), *Nrusingha Nath Khuntia* (1911), *Markandeya Mohapatra* (1916), *Kashinath Pujapanda* (1911-2009) etc. *Odissi* music had fully blossomed before the revival and development of *Odissi* music. It had all the potentialities that were required for any classical music. There are certain texts on *Odissi* music noted below which

are authentic and authoritative and are excellent indices to the development of this music.

- **Sangita Koumudi** -15<sup>th</sup> Century author unknown
- **Geeta Prakas**- Prior to 1556 - *Krushnadas Badajena Mohapatra*
- **Sangeet Muktabali**- Last part of 16<sup>th</sup> Century- *Raja Harichandan*
- **Geeta Prakash Boli**- 2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> decades or 17<sup>th</sup> Century – *Giri Gadadhar Das*
- **Sangeet Kalpalatika**-Between 1621-47- *Haladhar Mishra*
- **Sangeet Narayan**- 1650-*Purusottam Mishra*
- **Sangeet Sarani**- Last part of 17<sup>th</sup> Century - *Narayan Mishra*
- **Sangeetarnab Chandrika**- Last part of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century - *Raghunath Rath*

No music either *Karnātaki* or *Hindusthani* is ancient in both name & origin. Not a single reference to this name is found in the vast expanse of historical records, musical treatises and literary sources, etc. which are now available. In fact, the names of *Hindusthani* music and *Karnātaki* music emerge only since about 100 years. Their first-textual mention dates from only 1917. *Karnātaki* music commences its emergence as an entity from about the middle of 14<sup>th</sup> Century AD. If there is any contemporary belief of the antiquity of *Hindusthani* & *Karnātaki* music getting back to 1000 of years, then the dichotomy is an aberration. It is the Europeans who get the name of *Hindusthāni* music to the music of North India. While it is probable that the name *Karnātaki* music was given by *Tāmilians*. Of Course, the emergence of Odissi Music with a distinct entity was traced late in the contemporary musical scenario. It had the royal patronage & preference interaction and admixture of styles. It has got a very authentic & traditional decent.

#### 4. Conclusion

Odissi Music reflects and expresses our most deep-felt emotions, our hopes & aspirations as an idiom i.e., a product of our environment, a language that has been developed and refined over many years of growth & struggle. It is a part of our life & thought and it has to be understood, appreciated & criticized in the perspective of our life, thought & philosophy. We should not be worried with regard to any certification on the classicism on Odissi music since all the classical elements are being adhered to while singing Odissi music. The only problem what we see today is to prepare our talents in Odissi music for presentation at national & international level. Of course, efforts are on but expectations are high, we must march ahead with the time and at the same time let us not relegate to oblivion the works & teachings of our masters who had contributed a lot to the promotion & sustenance of Odissi music. A discerning, respectful interest in this should open up rewarding avenues of exploitation and delight in the Odissi music which is old yet often newer than the new. The dynamics of Odissi music are captivating largely the connoisseurs of music as well as the Odissi dance. This is undoubtedly a good sign for all of us which will boost the morale of singers, musicians & music lovers as well. Odissi music has a long & glorious tradition. The

tradition which has got a perception not only of the pastness of the past but of its presentness. It stimulates our living & thinking process. It is encouraging to note that Odissi music over the years is registering its presence as an impressive phenomenon in the Pan-Indian culture. There is no doubt Odissi music has all the potentials of a classical music. Sooner or later the concerned authorities & agencies, musicologists & critics will portray the dynamics of Odissi music as another classical music of India.

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