



ANTIQUITY OF ODISSI MUSIC: AN OVERVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Odissi music is a separate system of Indian classical music and is having all the essential as well as potential ingredients of Indian Classical form. The existing dance and musical tradition of Odisha is the cumulative experience of the last two thousand and five hundred years and can broadly be grouped under various varieties. The figures of dancers and musicians carved on ancient temple walls speak of Odisha's rich musical heritage. Since, there is the dearth of recorded evidence to prove the exact time of the advent of the earliest form of the Indian Classical Music into this land inflow during the period of Aryanisation of this land. There are historical evidences in the form of sculptural evidences, i.e. musical instruments, singing and dancing postures of damsels in the Ranigumpha Cave in Khandagiri and Udayagiri, Charya Geetika written between 7th to 12th centuries mostly by the poets of Odisha.

KEYWORDS : MUSIC, ODISSI, SONG, CLASSICAL

The present form of traditional Odissi music is no doubt the outcome of the continuous evolution of the earliest Indian classical music. One may reasonably believe its inflow during the period of Aryanisation of this land. Possibly Aryan culture crept into this land during the Age of Brahmans when bulk of Indian peninsula came under the Aryan influence. Music tinged with religion, attained mass appeal and royal patronage. As such the royal patronization of Art and Culture made the Odishan music so developed and enchanting for enjoyment of both Gods and Goddesses and human beings as well. This tradition is still continuous in its different manifestations. The inner voice of our history speaks a lot about the great music traditions of this country. In the second century B.C. king Kharavela, during his third year of rule, had taken several measures for promotion and propagation of music and dance education and instrumental music organized various cultural and musical extravaganzas throughout the state, which have been mentioned in the inscription of the stone carvings of 'Hati Gumpha' caves of Khandagiri, Udayagiri, these ancient pictorial stone carvings indicate that the music of then Odisha had a mass appeal among the people. The ancient monuments Lalitagiri, Ratnagiri, Pushpagiri built during the rule of king Bhousha indicates about various musical forms of that era. As per the historical evidence, there was much appreciation for the music education and its propagation in the period of 10th and 11th century during the rule of famous 'Somavansi' empire. The ancient stone inscriptions of various temples in those days indicated about the people's love for the music. In the subsequent period the king of 'Somavanshi', 'Gangavanshi', 'Surya-vanshi' were also said to have love and appreciation for the arts of music and dance. It is evident from the ancient traditions of 'Devadasi' dance, 'Gitagovinda' songs which were performed in those days on the premises of 'Shri Mandira' or lord Jagannath temple.

The systematized and developed form of music which has been sung in the world famous temple of the Lord Jagannath at the sacred Puri-Dhama in its different festive occasions as a part of the temple services, and cultured in the 'Jaga-Akhadas' of Puri and 16 Sasanas, 36 Karavada (Brahmin villages) as well as other rural areas in the district, is known as Traditional Odissi Music. This tradition is also having a long and glorious history of its own for more than 2500 years. Odisha could imbibe all the waves of classical music beginning from Sama-Gana to Raga Prabandha Gana, but finally it assumed the present form of "Ragaksyudra-Geeta-Prabandha-Gana". This system is popularly styled as traditional Odissi music. It is performed deftly in the shape of Raga-Ksyudrageeta-Prabandha-Gana a form of Indian classical music by the illustrious and celebrated poet Sri Jayadeva in Odisha. The treatise of Bharata, a pioneer of music and dance in India refers to the musical tradition of Odra substantiated by archaeological finds from the times (1st century BC) of Chedi dynasty. The innumerable sculptures of musical instruments depicted on the walls of temples from 6th century AD to 13th century AD testify to the glorious tradition of

music and its patronage by successive kingdom in Odisha. The antiquity of Odissi music is traced through historical evidence, i.e., the dramaturgical treatise Natyashastra (c. 200 BCE to 200 CE); sculptural, architectural, and inscriptional evidence beginning in the 2nd century BC, and found in such places as Puri, Konark, and Bhubaneswar; the 12th-century song-cycle Gitagovinda of Jayadeva; various regional treatises on music and dance written in Sanskrit, beginning most substantially perhaps with the sixteenth-century Gita Prakasha.

The Odissi music was born out of a cultural synthesis of several musical traditions: Jaga Akhadas of Puri district, Pala in coastal districts, GitiNatya (Musical Drama), Daskathia, etc. as various folk traditions prevalent in the region. All these forms of music had a tradition of thousands years.

Around the first century B.C., Odissi music was possibly known as Gandharb Veda, which was popularised in the Kharavela Yuga (a great king of Odisha). Charya Geetika (poems of Buddhist literature) written between 7th and 12th century, Bharat Muni's Natya Shastra written in 2nd to 4th century AD. (referred to the Odra Magadhi style of music and dance), Sangeet Ratnakar (Odra Magadhi style of Music), Odia Charyagitika by different Oriya Sidhacharyas in 7th to 11th century, Gita Govinda by Sri Jayadeva in 12th century, Sangita Sara by Hari Nayak in 14th century to 15th century, Rasavaridhi by Brundavan Das in 15th century, Oriya Mahabharata by Sarala Das in 15th century, Rasakallola by Dinakrushna Das in 16th century, etc. were authentic manuscripts of Odissi music. Books written in later years like Sangita Darpana, Sangit Kalpadruma, Sangitarnava Chandrika, Baidehisha Vilash, etc. had promoted Odissi music further. Hence, it is ascertained that Odissi music is more ancient than its counterparts like Hindustani or Carnatic.

The artists sing the songs in Odisha's major temples or at the courts of princely estates, composed in the Odia language from about the 16th to early 20th century. The Sanskrit songs like Jayadev's Gitagovinda are also performed by the singers. The meanings of these songs is very often based on the events of the "divine lovers" Radha and Krishna. Odissi music is now performed in music concerts in urban areas and occasionally on the local All India Radio station. Odissi music is heard during Odissi dance and drama. The three vital components of any classical music are tradition, codification and application. As explained above, we have inherited our musical tradition since the time of king Kharavela. Even Mahari tradition and singing of Geeta-Govinda in the temple of Lord Jagannath since the time of King Pratap Rudra Dev in the 15th Century proved our rich tradition. The kings from 'Bhanja-vanshi' royal family were also fond of music and dance. The sounds or Odishan music also used to echo those days inside the temples of viz. Parsumareswar, Mukteswar, Rajarani, Lingaraj, Kapileswar, Brahmeswar, Megheswar, Sobhaneswar etc. situated in Bhubaneswar. The 13th century old Konark temple and its

'Natyamandap' is the most lively witness of music study and it stands as the pride of Odias forever. Then evidences about the traditions of music in Odisha have been found in the 16th century old almanac called 'Madala Panji'. A number of Odia poetry and 'Chaupadi' poetic stanzas, written during , the period of 15th century till the 'Radhanath' era, were based on specific 'Raga-ragini' .some prominent temples in the ancient period were regarded as the centres of music-appreciation. Several musical conferences were held in the 'Natamandir' on the temple campus. Besides this many 'Rajdurbars' or courts of kings provided platforms for musical events. Debates and discussions about music were held regularly in the royal court of kings. 'Rajdurbars' of Keonjhar, Ganjam areas, the residences of Binjharpur and Kendrapara Zamindaars as per the sources. Odissi music, originated in Odisha, is based on four classes of music namely Dhruvapada (first line or lines to be sung repeatedly), Chitrapada (arrangement of words in a poetic style), Chitrakala (use of art in music) and Panchal (a collective term for a variable range of artisanal Indian caste groups). Odissi music involves several genres of songs as well as performances that are structured and composed in different ways depending on the context and function of the performance. At present, a solo vocalist begins with an alap (a relatively freeform introduction to and elaboration of the raga); moves into song text and tala, accompanied by percussion (drumming); and finishes with tans (improvisations) and variations on the given melody and text. Odissi music is unique by its "medium speed (it does not utilize the extremes of slow and fast tempos found, for example, in Hindustani music), the syncopated rhythms of the Madala, and its use of ornamentation that often gives its melodies an undulating, cascading feel". Sri Gitagovinda, Anirjukta Pravadha, Divya Manusi Prabandha, Chautisa, Chhanda, Chaupadi, Champu, Malasri, Sariman, Vyanjani, Chaturang, Tribhang, Kuduka Geeta, Laxana and Swaramalika are the various sub-forms, which individually or collectively constitute the traditional Odissi music. These sub-forms of the traditional Odissi music can be categorised under the classical music of Odisha. Odissi music has codified grammars, which are presented with specified Ragas. It has also a distinctive rendition style. It is lyrical in its movement with wave-like ornamentation. The pace of singing in Odissi is not very fast or too slow, and it maintains a proportional tempo which is very soothing. Odissi music is so ancient that different sages had opined different tales about the origin of Odissi music, being a very ancient art, has a very long, unbroken tradition behind it. Elements of Odissi Music are neither completely Hindustani nor Carnatic. Odissi music has its own unique style of composition and performance which is typical to this classical art form from the eastern state of Odisha is Odissi music. Even several learned researchers and noted historians have not been able to ascertain the actual period of the origin of Odissi music, Odissi dance and musical instruments. Although the origin of Odissi is unknown, still it's splendid with its own splendour and it is completely distinct. It can be asserted that Odissi music is the pride of great Jagannath culture. Alike its tradition and discipline, the application of Odissi music is equally rich in nature. It is noteworthy that the application of any classical music is more important as compared to its tradition and discipline or principles. From this point of view also Odissi music is splendid, as its application is much influential. In any form of classical music there are two specialties. On the basis of functioning range of Odissi music, it usually transforms itself into a smooth and beautiful form during presentation and thus it maintains its uniqueness.

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