



## THE EMINENT MUSICOLOGIST, POET AND PERFORMER OF ODISHI MUSIC: A REVIEW

**Dr. Niladri Kalyan Das**

Faculty of Music, OAV, Bhalubasa, Kaptipada, Mayurbhanj, Odisha.

### ABSTRACT

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.

**KEYWORDS :** Chandi Purana, Raguvansam, Musical, Odishi, Odia

### Banamali Das :

The poetic imagination as well as the creativity of ancient and medieval India, a great extent, concentrated on depicting the divine love between Sri Radha and Sri Krishna. That time poets in both Sanskrit and regional languages have been composed innumerable songs and lyrics about this divinely mysterious romance.

'Suchitra Ramayana' supposed to be the first composition of the poet Banamali has recently come to light and it throws some light of his life. From this, we came to know that his father's name was Hari. He has also mentioned he was Karana by birth and his house was in Dola Mandap Sahi, which lies east of Jagannatha temple. In this work, the poet has also praised Birakishore Deva, the king of Odisha and has mentioned by the year of the reign of Birakishor when the said work as being completed. According to him, it was in the 23<sup>rd</sup> Anka or 1754 A.D. assuming the work has completed when the poet's age was twenty five to thirty years and his date of birth could be presume to be between 1720 and 1730 A.D.

Banamali has not tried his hand in writing long poems on Krishna Lila the type of which gained ground in Odia literature at that time. Nor did he write long poems or Kavyas on romantic love of princes and princesses on the model of Upendra Bhanja whose writings by that time were also popular. Instead, he has only composed short lyric of songs on Radha Krishna Lila and devotional songs depicting his devotion to and plus earning for the Lord. Of course, as a lover of music since his young days, he composed some love lyrics before he was attracted towards religious life.

It has been rightly observing, as that 'Suchitra Ramayana' is his first composition. This work recently discovered, speaks of the poet's mastery over music. In this work, he has used 84 Rags indicating the names of the 8 talas according to which they are to be singing. The work consists of 365 songs, written according to Ramayana Champu of Bhojaraja. Champu according to Sanskrit prosody is a composition of both prose and poetry. However, the poet in his work has not used only prose. Instead of glorifying or seeking the mercy of Rama, he is the beginning of this work has paid his respect to Lord Krishna. It seems by that time he had accepted Lord Krishna as his 'Ista Devata' or Supreme Lord. In all probability, Banamali composed his Suchitra Ramayana for the performance of Rama Lila, a form of musical drama, which gained popularity in Odisha during his time. These songs are merely adaptation of the Sanskrit work Rama Champu.

All these songs are written according to the traditional form of Odia Chanda or Chaupadi. His songs can broadly be

categorized into three sections on Rama and Krishna Lila, devotional songs and love lyrics.

### Devotional songs:

The devotional songs are written in Odia language, popularly known as Janana and bhajana. Jananas are addressed to the divine being, Bhajana are addressed to one's conscience. Both the type of devotional songs in finding in the composition of Banamali. Devotional songs of Banamali are not too many numbers; only about 50 songs of him have so far become known. However, a few in numbers, some of them are still popular and are sung widely. His devotional songs mostly centre round Lord Jagannatha and Lord Krishna.

As has been said before, prior to his initiation as a Vaisnava, Banamali wrote a number of love songs depicting the feelings of the lover and the beloved. However, a dozen of such songs are collected and appended to his works as Gramya Rasa which center round love from a sentimental point of view. These songs are an illustration of his wit, good humor, aesthetic sense, artistic skill and creativity of a high order.

A few songs depict the lover's praise for the beauty of his beloved to appease her pretended anger. The poet has also delineated in his songs the sentiment of the beloved. When the husband is preparing to go to a distant place, the wife is imploring him not to leave her as spring; the beautiful season for lover's union is approaching.

The love songs of the poet though small in number speak of the romantic sensibility, aesthetic sense and artistic skill of a genuine medieval poet.

Then foregoing discussion on Banamali establishes him as an original lyric poet of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. His songs reflect the imagination, feeling and experience of the medieval period dominated by religiosity. In the development of the devotional and love lyric, the poet is a historical link between his predecessors like Dinakrishna Das, Dinabandhu Harichandana and Upendra Bhanja and his successors like Gopal Krishna Pattnaik, Baladeva Rath and others. Banamali, however, links up the love of Radha and Krishna to the ideal of romantic love of his own time, thus adding human touch and appropriate realism to the theme.

In language he is a great innovator while his predecessors clouded their subjects in the jugglery of words. Banamali preferred the colloquial idiom and the popular music pattern. In melody, his composition stands in the line of Jayadeva.

In the realm of devotional lyrics, Banamali's contribution seems to be even greater. Of course he follows the tradition of

composing devotional songs in simple language adopted by 'Panchasakha', Banamali's lyrics are simple and they move more freely like a clear stream. Both the devotional and love lyrics of Banamali are a landmark in the development of Visnava lyrics in Odia. Banamali's songs have acquired popularity because of their human appeal and musical quality.

#### **Krishna Das Badajena Mohapatra**

After Jayadeva Krishna Das Badajena Mohapatra was the nationally famous Odia vocalist of 16<sup>th</sup> century. He was contemporary of Emperor of Delhi Akbar the great & the last king of Odisha Gajapati Mukunda Deva.

From his book 'Gita Prakasa', we know him as the devotee of Lord Jagannatha. From his book, it concludes that he was patronized by King Gajapati Mukunda Deva. For some time he was in the court of Akbar, the great Abul Fazal in his Akbarinama mentioned that Mohapatra was the unrivalled Indian poetry and music. In his, book 'Gita Prakasa', he distinctly described the many aspects of music. He was a true musician ever to remember.

#### **Kavisamrat Upendra Bhanja**

Upendra Bhanja, the greatest poet of Riti age was born in 1680 in a royal family of Ghumusar where all his father and ancestor were famous poets and patrons of music and literature. The literature of Riti Age was full of epics. Epics express through a disciplined arrangement of words of Chanda, so Chanda is not only soul of literature also of music. The maestro of Chanda, Upendra Bhanja was given, the title 'Virabara' by the King of Nayagarh & 'Mangaraj' by the king of Khurda for his unquestionable poetic talent. All his works had expressed through Chandas. He had made the Chandas sweet to listen making them in various Ragaraginis & Brttavanis.

This Chandas can be compare with one of the old musical forms as Panchali kind. In his epics the Ragas he used the most were 'Mangala Gujjari', 'Basanta', 'Ramakeri', 'Kedar', 'Kanada', 'Bibhas', 'Kalyani', 'Basant Varadi', 'Sankarabharanam', 'Sindhu Desaksa', 'Mukhari', 'Kalyan', 'Paraja', 'Dhanasri', 'Todi and Bhairava' etc. All the mentioned Ragas have been using for last three hundred years and so, they called the pure Ragas in Odissi system of music.

Apart from Raga formation, his numerous Chandas are rhythmical and instrumental.

In conclusion, Upendra Bhanja thought even if not found as a musicologist or singer musician was familiar with musicology. His creations immortalize the Odia literature and the traditions of Odissi music with all its glory. He did in 1720.

#### **Abhimanyu Samanta Singhara**

Abhimanyu Samanta Singhara was one of the most front ranked poets of Riti Age, created epics in the form of Chandas to make rich the Odia literature and Odissi music tradition to its zenith. His ancestor came from Jodhpur in Rajasthan and navigated in Balia now in Jajpur district. Although he was a poet of inheritance, his poetic potential was multiplying after finding Vaisnava poet 'Sadananda Kavi Surya Brahma' as his teacher. His epics are 'Rasavati', 'Sulaxana', 'Premakala' and others. However, his 'Vidagdha Chintamani' was the best creation to take as the Maudamani in Odissi music tradition. According to Pandit Mrutyunjay Ratha, his 'Vidagdha Chintamani' was a combination of comparison, complex meaning and rhyme sweetness. It is sense stimulating and soul touching. The Ragas used in his Chandas are 'Mukhari', 'Varadi', 'Kalyan', 'Bhairava', 'Gouri', 'Kumbhakamodi', 'Kedar Kamodi', 'Sankaravaran', 'Kausika', 'Bhopala', 'Bangalasi', 'Gujjari', 'Lalit', 'Kedar', 'Nalini', 'Gauda', 'Soka-Komadi', 'Mangala Kamodi', 'Bibhas', 'Lalit Kamodi', 'Sarang', 'Patta

Manjari', 'Rada Kedar', 'Mangala Kedar', 'Kanda Kedar', 'Kedar Gouda', 'Sindhura' & 'Bhatiari' etc.

Apart from this the Chinas wore to be song as he instructed in the Brtta of Kalasa, Rasakulya, Cokhi, Cakrakeli, Asadasukla and in the Vani of Sanghamitari, Nialigava, Bala Chautisa Ca-Poi, Munivar and Charulabangalata. However, the use of 'Tala' is not founding in his writings. It infers that in his time Chandas were singing without Talas.

His use of Raga and Raginis, in his creations with the harmony of the tradition of odia epic literature was unique and are the own wealth of Odissi music style. His poetic creations are the wealth of Odia literature as are of Odissi music.

#### **Gopala Krishna**

Although Goal Krishna was not considered as a musician, his numerous writings have glorified the Odissi music tradition.

As a calendaring in King's court of Paralakhemundi, lover of music, master of Odia and Sanskrit language and creator of epics through Chandas he had lived his life and as a devotee, he abnegated his soul to Radha-krishna.

Paralakhemundi was under Madras by the dominating Britishers and which brought a cultural transaction between south India and Paralakhemundi. The Ragas from south India as Pantubaradi, Mayamalavgauda, Hari Kamboji, Nadanamakhiya and the Talas as Misra Cartal, Tisrajati ektala etc. were south Indian Ragas used by Goal Krishna in his Chandas.

He claims a special position in Odissi music and he was the communicator of language and music of out of Odisha ever to be remembered.

#### **Vanikantha Nimain Charan Hari Chandan**

Nimain Charn born on July 09, 1901 in a Zamindar family but spent his childhood in poverty. He was a great Odissi style devotional singer who immortalized the songs in the form of Chanda, Jana, Champu, Bhajana etc. for Lord Jagannatha to his last breath.

He started to learn music from his two uncles and mastered in Harmonium, Mridangam and Tabla, learned Hindustani from Madho Rao then went to Calcutta and learned a lot of music there.

Poverty was his great obstacle to learn music and which could make him a bus driver for some time. The fate turned to be a fortune when he recorded his first cassette by HMV. Then he became AIR artist in Odissi Vocal in 1934. In 1948, he became an artist in AIR Cuttack, in 1949, he sang for Odia film 'Shri Jagannatha'. His uniqueness was his pure singing style in the Odissi form. In 1943, he was conferred Vanikantha title by HMV. Kendra Sangita Nataka Academy award has awarded him in 1954. Among all the various awards, his Padmasri from Govt. of India was the true identification of his exponents.

He was more a devotee of Lord Jagannatha than singer was. He had urged Lord Jagannath to transmigrate the self in his Bahuda and the merciful Lord fulfilled his wish. He left the world to come again to perform his music for Lord.

#### **Singhari Shyam Sundara Kar**

Singhari Shyam Sundara Kar was a celebrated personality when a revolution age was passing during pre-independence period and post one period for the re-establishment of a national culture Singhari took the front position in that commitment. He was a melodies singer, learned and the best Mardala player, even his style prevails in these days of Odisha.

He enjoyed his childhood participating in various musical activities and made himself expert in vocal and instrumental in both Odissi and Hindustani. In 1954, in a national conference on music held in Delhi he was able to make of Odissi music. Apart from being a musician, he was also a good music teacher.

He was the teacher in Utkal Sangita Mahavidyalaya, Bhubaneswar, in AIR Cuttack and in a lot of schools and colleges. His great contribution to Odissi music was Shyamsundar Music College.

He was also the first Odissi dance teacher of today's artist of repute Priyambada Mohanty, the first dancer to make India know about Odissi dance. He was awarded by Utkal Sangita Samaj, Utkal Sahitya Samaj, Prajatantra Prachara Samiti and State Sangita Nataka Academy.

He was conferred the Gayak Ratna, Sangita BEhari, the peacock of the Gove of Chanda, the glorious emperor of Odissi music, Sangitacharya, Srikhetra Ratna etc.

**Lee Siegel** (1978) opined in his book that -The quintessence of Odissi music is discerned in the intrinsic vision of the learners and listeners, who repose in Gitagovinda, for its traits like composition, improvisation, raga repertoire, treatment of rhythms and rhymes, usage and genre. Sri Jayadev has not only originated a specific music tradition, systematic form and definite melodic pattern, raga-tala repertoires but also built a socio-cultural community. The purity, sanctity and characteristic features of Odissi music have been enriched refined and pervaded its horizon through Gitagovinda of Sri Jayadev. We have the first evidence of Odissi music in an articulated and systematic form from the versifications of Gitagovinda. This sent and seer, poet and musician, Sri Jayadev was born at Kendubillow of Odisha. We adore him as the progenitor of Odissi system of classical music. Odissi music gives great importance to the lyric where words are required to be sung without fragmentation or distortion. All songs are required to be sung in specific 'Ragas' and 'Taalas'. Typical Odissi taalās have a different distribution of beat and pause from north or south Indian taalās with the same number of beats. Sri Jayadev has composed this illustrious Gitagovindas as per the specifications of Udrāmagadhi prabritti, Ardha magadhi Padasrita giti, Bhinna swarasrita giti and navatalasrita giti. The songs of Gitagovinda are set to talas (rhythms) such as Rupaka Nisarah Jati Astatala, & ekatali, which are included in navatalas, commonly used in Odissi till to-day. The raga repertoire used in Gitagovinda such as Malava, Gurjari, Vasanta, Ramakiri, Malavagouda, Gundakiri, Karnata, Desakhya, Desavaradi, Bhairavi, Varadi etc. are being recited in Lord Jagannath temple as well as all the corners of Odissa since 12th century and in course of time Odissi music has been gaining popularity as a concert music in contemporary world. Although there are differences reflected in the classical music form of North, South, or East India, sensibly, these should not be considered as entirely different types, rather the underlying similarities are to be noted as the essence of Indian classical music but carrying distinctive form or style. The distinctive form or style emphasized, is rather based on its regional identity, tradition, culture, language and glorious history brought about by the kings who and how they had patronized the music form or by the Poets and composers of their time. It is ultimately the outcome of the fine work of the schools from different regions of India, following the same principles stated in the ancient Sanskrit treatises on music (Popley HA, 1996; Parhi KN, 2007).

#### REFERENCES:

1. Das R, (1989, 1996, 2002, 2015Eds.): Sangita Sangya, Publisher, Ramahari Das Odissi Gurukul Trust, Badahata, Bira Govindapur, Sakhigopal, Puri, City Print, Infocity Area, Bhubaneswar-751024.
2. Das R, 2004: Odissi Sangitara Parampara O Prayoga, Publisher, Koushiki

- Prakashani, J. M. -8, Bira Surendra Sae Nagar, Bhubaneswar- 751007, City Print, Infocity Area, Bhubaneswar-751024.
3. Dennen D, 2009: The Third Stream: Odissi Music, Regional Nationalism, and the Concept of "Classical" (The Odishan version) The Odishan: A Magazine on Culture of Odisha (vol. 1, no. 2)
4. Dennen D, 2010: Revised 2012, The Third Stream: Odissi Music, Regional Nationalism, and the Concept of "Classical", Asian Music, 41(2): 149-179.
5. Dev, B. (1993), An Introduction Of Indian Music, By Chaitanya, Publication Division.
6. Ghosh M, 2002: Natyasastra. p. 2 note 3. ISBN 81-7080-076-5.
7. Hota D, 1980: UdraPaddhatiya Mela-Raga-Tala-Prabandha Lakshyana, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed, Published by Swar-Rang, Bhubaneswar.
8. Hota D, 2001: Udra Paddhatiya Sangita Lahari, 1<sup>st</sup> Part, Published by Swar-Rang, Bhubaneswar.
9. Mohan SR, 1997: Odia Sahitya, Kala O Sanskruti, Publisher, Sahadeva Pradhan, Friends Publishers, Binod Bihari, Cuttack-753002, Odisha
10. Mohanty JB, 1993: Banamali Das. Sahitya Akademi. ISBN 978-81-7201-449-0