



## The Tradition of Tal-Vadya and Role of Mardal in Odissi Music

KEYWORDS

TAL-VADYA, ODISSI, MARDAL, MUSIC

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**ABSTRACT** *There is definitely a distinctive position of 'Tal-vadya' instruments in the Indian system of music. First of the entire 'Tal-vadya' musical instrument 'Mardal', used in Odissi – music has left its mark in Indian music as a complete fully fledged musical instrument. The melodious sounds of Mardal accompanied with the rhythmic Chhandas of Odissi dance has appealed and enchanted a lot of people across the world. The 'Tal-vadya' musical instrument which is used in 'Carnataki-music' is called 'Mrudangam' and the musical instrument used for Hindustani music is called 'Pakhawja'. Though the musical instrument 'Mudangam' and 'Pakhawja' has some resemblance with the 'Tal-vadya' instrument 'Mardal', but the shape, size and design and also the playing process of 'Mardal' is quite different and unique from other instruments. Some informative facts regarding the process and style of making 'Mardal' musical instrument are found mentioned in some ancient voluminous –books which had been composed or authored in Odisha*

Music is created with the combination of three distinct arts viz. Song, dance and instrumental music. Human life is said to have an intimate and historical relationship with music. The origin of this music has been based upon 'Naada' or 'dhwani' which means sound. The existence of music without sound (Naada) cannot be imagined.

'Tala' has a very significant role in music. Sage, Bharat Muni, the composer of 'natyashastra' has termed music as 'swaraTalpadatmak' in his words. Basically music depends on three elements. These are viz. 'swara' (tune), pada (lyrical lines), Tala (harmony). 'swara'(tune) refers to music oriented sound. 'pada' means treasure of words designed for recitation. 'Tala' is a way for which song and dance are established. Music attains excellence through an amazing and harmonious union of Swara (tune), 'Shabda'(words) and 'Tala' (harmony). 'Tala' is called as the life giving energy of music. 'Tala' brings out a refreshing and gladdening feeling among the audience.

'Tala' works as a barrier in music. The significance of 'Tala' is important among the three important parts of music. There exists a natural uniformity in this entire universe; like that the duration of music is framed as per the system of Tala in music. Happiness and beauty are enhanced through this system of uniformity. In Indian music, association of 'Tala' is essential for the expansion of 'Raga'. With a harmonious combination of 'Tala' and 'Laya' three parts called. 'Tali', 'Khali', 'Bhaga' etc. are formed. With the help of these three parts singers, instrument players and dancers are able to choose their respective positions of performance. As like the wild and irregular flow of a river is curbed through a dam, similarly in order to create a system of uniformity in music required 'Talas' are applied in this and thus music is bound with the system of 'Tala'. When a flood occurs in a river then it is the dam which acts to control the flood water and reduces its danger level. In the same manner if the music has no system of 'Tala' then it would create irregularity or disharmony, so Tala keeps music in proper order. The first and foremost function of 'Tala-Vadya' is that it works like a device for measuring the movement of music. 'Tal-Vadya' generates life into the music. 'Tal-Vadya' makes the music more lively,

enhances the beauty of music and makes it more attractive. 'Tal-Vadya' is not only used to measure the time or degree of music but also helps to create sweet and melodious feelings among the listeners. The musical performance when done in accordance of 'Tala' creates an amazing pleasure among its listeners. And this feeling of enjoyment makes the music more attractive. 'Tal-Vadya' is solely essential bring out a completeness in music. 'Tal-Vadya' is also helpful for the expression of thoughts and feelings. Besides play back- music and instrumental music ('Susheera' & 'Tat-Vadya'), 'Tal-Vadya' is also able to create 'rasa'.

For creating different 'Rasas' different types of musical instruments need to be played. The application of various styles of musical-performance is also essential. For creating 'Veera-rasa' specific sounds instruments like 'Mrudanga', 'Naagra', 'Dhol', 'Tabla', 'Dholak', 'Naal' etc. Musical-instruments are played. For creating 'Bhakti-rasa', the musical instruments like 'Manjira', 'Mardal', 'Kartala', 'Chimta' etc. Need to be played. The music composers along with their team of expert instrumentalists off the concerned films while composing music on these types of situations use to play the 'Tal-Vadya' instruments like 'Mrudanga', 'Mardal', 'Tabla', 'Dholak' etc. And thus create the required sounds for these above said situations. The situations like fear, anger and enmity etc. are also composed with the help of 'Tal-vadya' musical instruments. Various types of 'Swaras' have been created with the playing of ancient or traditional as well as the modern musical instruments. The role of 'Tal-vadya', in classical music is most important. The excellence of music is reflected through the indications about the place of 'Swara's origin and 'Sam' etc. As there is significance of 'Tabla' in Hindustani music and the 'Mrudang' instrument has significance in Carnataki music. Likewise 'Mardal' like one of these 'Tal-vadya' instruments also has a significant role in Odissi music.

Several other 'Tal-vadya' instruments are used in various folk music the concerned regions. Be it the classical music, folk music or film music, or else devotional music, the use of 'Tal-vadya' instruments is inevitable.

### The position of 'Mardal' in classical and semi classical music:-

The existence of 'Tala-vadya' (traditional musical instruments) is contemporarily related to the origin and gradual development of Indian music. Odissi music is one of this Indian-music and the 'Tal-vadya' musical instrument which is used in Odissi-music is called 'Mardal'. With the gradual development of Indian music this musical instrument called 'Mardal' has come to existence. As per the continuous tradition of Odissi music this 'Tal-vadya' music has been in use as a solo instrument and also is used during the performances of songs and dance. Besides this 'Mardal' instrumental music has much importance in the group musical performance. Even though the musical instrument 'Tabla' is used more these days during the musical programmes, the striking and melodious sounds created by playing of 'Mardal' has a special attraction towards its listeners. Besides being used in Odissi songs, 'Mardal' instrument is also played in the songs like 'Champu', 'Chhanda', 'Geeta-Govinda', 'Bhajan', 'Janana'. Today this musical instrument is also used in several music-cassettes, composed by some famous music-directors. 'Mardal' instrument which is played during the performance of Odissi classical dance has now become a popular and attractive instrument across the world.

'Mardal' instrument occupies a distinct position in the classical music, semi-classical music and light music.

### The origin of 'Mardal' and its gradual development:-

The musical instruments used in Odissi classical songs and dance which are called 'Tal-vadya' are mainly made of leather and this 'Tal-vadya' is popularly called as 'Mardal'. As like the use of 'Mrudangam' is important in 'Carnataki'-classical music and 'Tabla' instrument has significance in 'Hindustani' music similarly 'Mardal' is also one these 'Tal-Vadya' instruments which has of much importance in 'Odissi' classical music. It can be said undoubtedly that 'Mardal' instrument came into being along with the Odissi music. It is said because for the purpose of singing and dancing there needs to be a musical instrument. As per the researches and findings in this context, about the origin and evolution of 'Mardal' the following informative facts are being presented.

To get an insight into the origin and evolution of 'Mardal' (musical-instrument) we have to know about the origin of 'Tala-vadya' musical instruments, for this we need to go through the mythological and historical legends, ancient scriptures etc. regarding this. At first when there was the usage of three-faced specific drum-like musical instrument, it look like the present day 'Mardal' with one face (surface) towards upwards and the other two faces were made on the sides. These facts about the musical instruments have been found in the writings of Bharat Muni's 'Natya Shastra' book. Evidence about this musical instrument have been found from stone carving of some temples, it shows some statues in dancing postures, holding this type of instru-

ment. 'Mardal' musical instrument is also known by some other names like 'Puskar', 'Mooraj', 'Pakhauij' etc. The main musical instrument which is used during the performance of Odissi music is called 'Mardal'. According to some eminent scholars, 'Mardal' instrument has been made and designed by following the style and design of 'Mrudanga' instrument, but there also some differences of opinions about the origin of 'Mardal'. As per some research works and findings and according to some eminent veteran musicians of Odisha some information about the origin and history of 'Mardal' are mentioned in the following lines.

various ancient stone carvings belonging 1<sup>st</sup> b.c. or 2<sup>nd</sup> century year old 'Rani Gumpha' and 'Hati Gumpha' during the rule of emperor Kharavela indicate about the musical-arts of Utkal (presently Odisha) various stone carvings of historical 'Rani Gumpha' and 'Hati Gumpha', made during the rule of Kalingana emperor (during 1<sup>st</sup> century b.c. and 2<sup>nd</sup> century) indicate about the musical arts of Utkal (presently called Odisha). Legends about the Odishan music are also indicated from the stone carvings and art works of some ancient temples. According to the 'Natya Shaastra' book written by Bharat Muni the musical art of Utkal called 'Udra- Sangeet' was discovered first. The musical art which was relevant during the age of god or deities and 'gaandharvas' successively developed and gradually became popular as 'Udra-sangeet' and the Odissi music which we use to sing today was formerly known as 'Udra- sangeet'.

The musical instrument which was used along with these musical performances was called as 'Mardal' by the performers. Whenever there were musical celebrations among the Sabar tribals, the audience got spellbound with these performances and the melodious sounds vibrating from this 'Maadal' or 'Mardal' instrument used to create an amazing and magical feeling among the audience. Earlier these 'Sabar' tribals used to call this 'Maadal' instrument as 'Matta' (meaning intoxicating). In course of time this 'Maadal' instrument was called as 'Mardal'. According to the information from another source, it is said that the tribals used to adore the wooden pole (Kastha-Stambha) deity 'Maadal' in the form of 'Sabari-Narayani'. There have been some evidences also in this regard. According to this 'Kastha-Devta' or wooden deity's name (Maadal) and by following (Shabda-Brahma) or (Nada-Brahma) the best of 'Anaddhya- Vadya' called 'Mardal' gradually became popular as the 'Mardal' instrument. The traditional musical instruments of Odisha have been created so as to enhance the melody of music. Hence in order to make the musical Instruments more interesting various experiments have been done from time to time.'Mardal' is the main rhythmic musical instrument (Tal-vadya), used in Odissi music.

The trend of 'Mardal' playing along with Odissi-dance has been continuing till date, since the post-independence period of our country. 'Mardal' is also played along with various dance performances held in different regions of the world.

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