



SALIENT FEATURES OF ODISSI MUSIC

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ABSTRACT The tradition of Odissi classical music goes back to ancient times. There are some names of the ragas in Odissi music which are original and unique. They are not found in any other treatises of mainstream music systems. Yet they have their own flavor. Odissi music is codified with grammar, which are presented with specified Ragas. It is ornamented with distinctive rendering features unique to Odissi music. It is lyrical in its movement with wave-like ornamentation and full of Rasa. The pace of singing Odissi music is not very fast nor too slow, maintaining a proportional soothing tempo. Odissi music based on its musical texts is inherent to Odisha, historically the great province of Kalinga, is the eastern state of India with its unique, protective geographical localization bordered by dense forest, mighty rivers and rich, extended alluvial coast line that presumably maintained its cultural integrity.

KEYWORDS : Odissi, Music, Prabandha, Alap, Chhanda

Odissi music is a form of performing art and the substance performed, decorated with various musical techniques to make it more grasping and involving for the listeners is called the *Prabandha* of the music. The more artistic is the *Prabandha* when performed with precise concentration and knowledge in a lyrical manner, controlled within the limits of *Swara*, *Laya*, *Taala* and elaborated according to the *Raga*-based style of the *Prabandha*, the better the quality of the *Prabandha* becomes.

Composition of Prabandha:

It becomes essential to discuss on the composition of *Prabandha* that provide the basis but unique architecture to a specific musical elaboration. The components needed in the designing of a superior *Prabandha* consists of different *Dhatu* and *Angas*. The *Dhatu* which is four types means different parts or the limbs of the *Prabandha*. The four types are *Udgraha*, *Melapaka*, *Dhruba*, and *Abhoga* arranged in this order out of which the third part *Dhruba* is as such because it is never rejected and rhymed repeatedly. Also, the part between *Dhruba* and *Abhoga* is called *Antaras* seen in the *Shastras*. The fourth or the last part, *Abhoga* describes the name of the composer or writer.

Any *Prabandha* has six *Angas* such as *Swara*, *Biruda*, *Pada*, *Tenaka*, *Pata* and *Tala* that has the following significance:

1. *Swara* include Sa, Re, Ga, Ma, Pa etc
2. *Biruda* include the description of *Guna*
3. *Pada* will include the necessary content of the *Prabandha*
4. *Tenaka* include the beneficial sounds such as, *Nom*, *Tom*, *Ta*, *Na*
5. *Pada* will include *Dha*, *Dhrug* *Badya*
6. *Tala* will include the beats such as *Adi*, *Jati*, *Ektali* etc

According to the concept of traditional classical music, the composition of a *Prabandha* can be based on either six, five, four, three, or even two of these *Angas*. This type of *Prabandha* composition in Sanskrit as well as Odia is very ancient to Odisha tradition and is recited popularly not only among the professional performers of classical music but also by the traditional local performers of the villages. According to traditional concept of classical music, the composition of a *Prabandha* can be based on either six, five, four, three, or even two of these *Angas*. This type of *Prabandha* composition in Sanskrit as well as in *Odia* is the ancient tradition of Odisha and is performed popularly not only by the professionals of classical music but also by the traditional local village performers.

Prabandha cannot be composed with less than two *Angas* although the composer of *Sangeeta-samay-Sara* does not agree to this classification and considers *Champu*, *Kabita*, *Sena*, *Neeti*, and *Shruti* as the *Jati* of the *Prabandha*.

Types of Prabandha and its Presentation:

Basically, there are three types of *Prabandha* such as *Suddha*, *Aali*, and *Biprakirna* which include eight *Vedas* in *Suddha*, thirty-two *Vedas* in *Aali* and thirty-six *Vedas* in *Biprakirna* *Prabandha*. Although there were certain orderly way of singing the *Prabandhas* as voiced by the poets or saints, in modern time these traditional orders have become

limited where the *Prabandhas* are sung differently with additional changes. It is important to at least have an understanding of the ancient style among the students of Odissi music. The current Odissi system mainly comprises the following *Prabandhas* such as, *Odissi*, *Champu*, *Chhanda*, *Chautisha*, *Gita Govinda*, *Janana*, and *Bhajanaas* described below;

1. Odissi: In this system, traditional Odissi style is synthesized and presented. The style comprises four classes of music synthesis and presentation namely, *Dhrupadanga*, *Raganga*, *Vabanga*, and *Natyanga*.

- **Odissi Dhrubapadanga** is sung and presented based on one *Raga* and one *Tala* that comprises mostly descriptive, devotional substance. *Odissi dhrubapadanga* is usually decorated with prior *Alap* inclusive of *Noom toom* sounds as well as with *Sa*, *Re*, *Ga*, *MaSwaras*. The content of the *Prabandha* is also repeated and elaborated either with characteristic "one time", "Two time", or "four times" faster process limited within the *Laya*. The style does not involve *Nibaddha Alap* or *Tan*. The *Talabased Malasree Kuduka*, *Sarimanasongs* from Odisha are classified under *Dhrubapadanga* style of Odissi music presentation.
- **Odissi-Raaganga** is the most important system of Odissi presentation based on single *Raga* and *Tala* and following all necessary ingredients involved in singing a *Raga* based song. The characteristic feature used in elaborating the *Prabandha* from beginning to end include,

A. **Annibaddha Alap** which is sung elaborately based on the notes or *Swaras* of the specific *Raga* but independent of the *Talas*. The flow of the *Alap* should strictly depend upon the skillful control and importance over the *Badi-Sambadi*, *Alpatwa-Bahutwaor* on the measured weight on the *swaras*, and over the *Nyasa-swara*. This is another important aspect of Odissi music.

B. **Prabandha** is a specific *Raga-based* arrangement of the subject that is sung skillfully within the limit of the *Tala*. The poems or *Prabandhas* from *Riti-juga* poets are usually used in Odissi *Raganga* style of music. Here, the *Sthayee* and *Antaras* sung without any variations following *Annibaddha Alap*. The *Padi* is sung with the *Antara*. The *Prabandha* may consist of several *Antaras* and *Padis* but the performer decides on the necessary *Antaras* and *Padis* for the *Prabandha*. Yet it is a must to sing the *Bhanita* or the last *Pada* on the composer or the poet of the *Prabandha*.

C. **Nibaddha Alap** is sung along with and confined to the limit of *Tala*. In this process, the *Prabandha* is sung through *Pada*, *Padi*, then back to *Sthayee* and *Nibaddha Alap* is sung and elaborated between the *Sthayee* and *Ghoshao* of the *Prabandha*. This is followed by the *Antara* and *Nibaddha Alap* again. The *Alap* is done always with *Aaa* sound and pronunciation.

D. **Pada-Binyasa** is the elaboration of part of a *Pada* repeatedly and every time in a new or different way, skillfully preserving the integrity

of the words in the *Pada*. The essence of the process is to express and bring out the best “sense” for the *Pada* to make it more attractive and perceptive to listeners. Thus *Pada Binyasa* is done on the *pada* of the *Ghosa* following *Nibaddha Alap* and on the *Pada* in the *Padi* following *Nibaddha Alap*.

E. **Swara Binyasa** is the elaboration of the *Swara* of the *Raga* using different *Chhanda* and *Laya*. This is usually done along with the *Tan* of the *Raga*. This glorifies the singing skill, the *Swara-sadhana* and complete understanding and control over the *Tala-Laya* of the *Raga Prabandha*. Thus, the *Sa, Re, Ga, Ma Swaras* are used decoratively in *Swara Binyasa* and sung after the *Pada Binyasa* following *Ghosa* and *Antara*.

F. **Taan** is the last part of Odissi *Raganga* presentation and mostly a process of first-paced singing elaboration of the *Swaras* of a *Raga* skillfully confined to *Tala and Laya*. Like *Alap*, *Tan* is an indispensable part of *Raga* based songs and adds to the adept presentation of the singer. This part is not inclusive of all the characteristics of the *Raga* presented. In Odissi style of presentation, *Mixed Tans* are usually included than the *Sapat-tan*.

Thus an orderly, systematic chronological approach is obligatory for the best quality presentation of a *Prabandha*.

Odissi Bhabanga is the style where more importance is given to *Bhaba* or expression and *Rasa* during presentation than on *Raga* or *Tala* of the *Prabandha*. These *Prabandhas* are not limited to the characteristics of the *Raga*, rather focuses more to bring out the essence of the content by presenting in more traditional form of *Swara*. Here, *Ragas* are sometime mixed and sung with additional *Nibaddha alap* and *Pada binyasa* to enhance the *Bhaba* in the *Prabandha*. It is not necessary to include *Swara binyasa* and *Tan*.

Odissi Natyanga Prabandha is usually small and sung for Odissi dance presentation. It is excessively used for the unique *Gotipua* style of dance form from Odisha. The prominence is mostly given to the *Tala* and the *Shringara rasa* of the *Prabandha* but *Pada binyasa*, *Swara binyasa* and *Tan* can be included briefly.

Champu is the *Prabandha* composition having both prose and poetry (*Gadya and Padya*) or *Champu* is composed using both prose and poetry. Like *Odissi Prabandha*, *Champu* compositions are also based on *Radha-Krushna Leela*. There are two types significance associated with this type of composition in Odisha, the literary and the musical aspects. The literary significance is having both prose and poetry being used in the compositions with each *Odia* alphabet, starting with the first letter, 'Ka' to the last letter 'Ksha' comprising a total of thirty four alphabets. *Prabandhas* starting with *Aa* to *Ksha* of *Odia* alphabet is called *Matruka Prabandha*. The *Prabandha* written in Sanskrit and based on *Marga Tala* is called *Dibya-Matruka-Prabandha*, the *Prabandha* written in other regional languages are called *Manushi-Matruka-Prabandha* and the *Prabandhas* written with both *Dibya* and *Manushi* are called *Dibya-Manushi-Matruka-Prabandha*. Among the *Champu* composed in Odisha, the *Kishor Chandrananda Champu* by *Odia* poet *Kabisurya Baladev Rath* is populated mostly all over Odisha.

The characteristics of *Champu-sangeeta* include that it is based on specific *Ragas* and sung confined to the specified *Raga* and *Tala* with certain differences from the way the Odissi is sung. Much attention is given to retain the purity of the specified *Raga*. Also, *Tan* should not be added to *Champu* songs. Although, the singing style between Odissi and *Champu* does not reflect much differences in recent times, the originality in pronunciation style for both should be maintained.

Chhanda is another important style of Odissi music system. These may or may not be *Raga* based but should be sung confined to its own classification of *Bruta* or *Bani*. According to Sanskrit based *Chhanda*, they consist of *Swara, Tala* and several *Padas* and belong to such *Brutas* as, *Chokh, Chakrakeli, Ashada Shukla, Kalasha, Poibani, Panchama baradi, Kalyana ahari, Rasakulya* etc.

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