



USE AND APPLICATION OF MARDALA : AS A SOLO CONCERT INSTRUMENT

Budhanatha Swain Ph.D. Scholar, Utkal University Of Culture, Bhubaneswar.

ABSTRACT The movements in Odissi music has nicely been compared with a smooth flowing river. The main nature of our Odissi music is that, this is neither very slow nor very fast. It would be appropriate to say that this is music with balanced form. Accordingly the Odissi style of music has its own uniqueness and it is quite different from north Indian and south Indian music. Odissi style of classical music has some similarity with Hindustani 'Dhrupad' style. 'Gamak' is common to both, though Odissi also adopts the 'Tom Nom' sounds. The percussion instrument played with Odissi music is the 'Mardala', which is similar to 'Pakhawaj'. Temple sculptures in Odisha abound in statues of 'Mardala' players. Odissi is a very old classical style of music with specific raagas, taals, and its own special style of rendering of lyrics and melody.

KEYWORDS : MUSIC, MARDALA, ART, TRADITION, INSTRUMENT

Mardala, the traditional percussion of Odisha, has a distinctive character of its own in its size, shape and mode of playing. its distinctive sound patterns and subtlety in resonance have established its own identity. Mardala is used as an inevitable musical instrument in the ritualistic service by Mardala players (Madeli seva) in the temple of Lord Jagannath. For Odissi classical dance and music Mardala is an inspiring percussion. It has now endeared common people sans art connoisseurs and carved its own niche in the realm of Indian classical instrumental music.

'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.

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', 'Khalī', '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.

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 'Mardala'. With the gradual development of Indian music this musical instrument called 'Mardala' 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 'Mardala' 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 'Mardala' has a special attraction towards its listeners. Besides being used in Odissi

songs, 'Mardala' 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. 'Mardala' instrument which is played during the performance of Odissi classical dance has now become a popular and attractive instrument across the world.

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 'Mardala'. As like the use of 'Mrudanga' is important in 'Carnataki'- classical music and 'Tabla' instrument has significance in 'Hindustani' music similarly 'Mardala' is also one these 'Tal-Vadya' instruments which has of much importance in 'Odissi' classical music. It can be said undoubtedly that 'Mardala' 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 'Mardala' the following informative facts are being presented.

At first when there was the usage of three-faced specific drum-like musical instrument, it look like the present day 'Mardala' 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 'Natyashastra' 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 instrument. 'Mardala' musical instrument is also known by some other names like 'Puskar', 'Mooraj', 'Pakhauj' etc. The main musical instrument which is used during the performance of Odissi music is called 'Mardala'. According to some eminent scholars, 'Mardala' instrument has been made and designed by following the style and design of 'Mrudanga' instruments some research works and findings and according to some eminent veteran musicians of Odisha some information about the origin and history of 'Mardala' are mentioned in the following lines.

The musical instrument which was used along with these musical performances was called as 'Mardala' 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 'Mardala' instrument used to create an amazing and magical feeling among the audience. Earlier these 'Sabar' tribals used to call this 'Maadal' instrument as 'Mattal' (meaning intoxicating). In course of time this 'Maadal' instrument was called as 'Mardala'. "Odisha has an age-old tradition of the use the Mardala. It is solely used as an accompanying instrument in Odissi Dance. One of the chief classical dances of India. Though Odisha has a rich heritage of other folk dances and folk music, they are seldom accompanied by the playing of Mardala.

Music was indeed a means to propagate religious faith and belief systems in Odisha. With Odishan culture woven around its magnificent temples, the Jagannath and Mukteswar temples, bards travelled from one place to another singing the glories of these deities. Poet Jayadeva was the first saint-poet to compose lyrics which could be sung. His Gita Govindam is considered a pioneering effort, expressive of the infinite

love between Krishna and Radha. He gave music a new contemporary form and style which are being adhered to this day.

One of the six classical dance forms of India is the Odissi dance of Odisha. With its origins in the temples and performed by the Devadasis, Odissi is a sensuous performing art set to soulful music. Usually portraying the Divine and Infinite love of Lord Krishna and Radha, Odissi dance is distinct from other classical dances of India in its costumes, music, rhythm, and style. Graceful and feminine, it is marked by Bhangis (sculpturesque poses) and Mudras (hand gestures). Odissi style of classical music has some similarity with Hindustani 'Dhrupad' style. 'Gamak' is common to both, though Odissi also adopts the 'Tom Nom' sounds. The percussion instrument played with Odissi music is the 'Mardala', which is similar to 'pakhawaj'. Temple sculptures in Odisha abound in statues of 'Mardala' players.

Mardala, the traditional percussion of Odisha, has a distinctive character of its own in its size, shape and mode of playing. Its distinctive sound patterns and subtlety in resonance have established its own identity. Mardala is used as an inevitable musical instrument in the ritualistic service by Mardala players (Madali seva) in the temple of Lord Jagannath. For Odissi classical dance and music Mardala is an insparable percussion. It has now endeared common people sans art connoisseurs and carved its own niche in the realm of Indian classical instrumental music.

Odissi dancer is usually accompanied by a musician playing Mardala or pakhawaj, a flutist and a singer. Mardala is a traditional drum played by a guru who beats bolas and pronounces drum syllable formulae out loud accompanying to the fragments of the pure dance. Manjiras or small brass cymbals used to keep the subtle nuances of the rhythmic accompaniment are also used effectively. According to tradition maharis used to sing by themselves, but as a result of the dance moving on stage and into big halls this mission was taken upon by a professional singer. Nowadays an Odissi dancer is sometimes accompanied by a sitarist instead of a more customary in the past violinist, who appeared as a result of the influence of the neighbouring Karnataka. However, more often among all instrumentalists a flutist is invited.

In Odissi Sangeet Sastras it is mentioned that among all the skin percussions Mardala is the best. Its description is found in Charyagiti and various Sastras and Kavyas of medieval Odisha. In all Odishan temples also one finds the sculpture of Mardala players. Mardala vadini (the woman Mardala player) of Konark is famous. It is played during various Sevas (services) of Lord Jagannath. It is played as an accompaniment both in Mahari dance as well as Gotipua dance.

Odissi Mardala more or less resembles Pakhavaj but there is also a difference both in terms of construction and technique. The Mardala which is originally used in the Jagannath Temple is simple in construction and there is no mechanism in it to adjust the pitch. Simhari Shyamsundar Kar added 'Gotakas' to this simple Mardala so that it can be tuned as per need. In Pakhavaj, for example on the left side a layer of flour is given while in Mardala there is Kiran. As regards to practice and technique the Vaani or Ukuta, Khandi, Gadi Arassa in Mardala are different from those in Pakhavaj. Especially, the Chanti and movement of fingers are quite different in Mardala.

Till now Mardala is played mostly as an accompaniment of Odissi dance.

REFERENCES

1. 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.
2. Hota D., 1980: Udra Paddhatiya Mela-Raga-Tala-Prabandha Lakshyana, Swar-Rang, Bhubaneswar.
3. Mohanty, G., 2007: Odissi the classical music, pg: 108-111, Orissa Review, August.
4. Panda GC, 2004: Odissi Raga Ratnabali, Bhagavati Prakashini, Bhubaneswar.