



USE AND APPLICATION OF INEVITABLE MUSICAL INSTRUMENT MARDAL IN CULTURAL TRADITION OF ODISHA

ARTS

**DIBAKAR
PARIDA**

PH.D. RESEARCH SCHOLAR FACULTY OF PERFORMING ART, UTKAL
UNIVERSITY OF CULTURE, BHUBANESWAR, ODISHA

ABSTRACT

The percussion instrument played with Odissi music is the 'Mardal', which is similar to 'Pakhawaj'. Temple sculptures in Odisha abound in statues of 'Mardal' players. Mardal, 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. Mardal is used as an inevitable musical instrument in the ritualistic service by Mardal players (Madeli seva) in the temple of Lord Jagannath. For Odissi classical dance and music Mardal is an inspirable percussion. It has now endeared common people sans art connoisseurs and craved its own niche in the realm of Indian classical instrumental music. The melodious sounds of Mardal accompanied with the rhythmic Chhandas of Odissi dance has appealed and enchanted a lot of people across the world.

KEYWORDS

MARDAL, PERCUSSION, MUSIC, CULTURE, TRADITION

Odisha is the bastion of rich cultural heritage with its historical monuments, archaeological sites, traditional arts, sculpture, dance and music. Situated on the eastern coast of India, Odisha, more popularly known as Orissa, is a beautiful state with its own proud history and culture. Dotted with beaches, wild life sanctuaries, historical monuments, Odisha is also home to a vibrant arts and culture. Its traditions and customs being preserved and practiced for centuries reflect the glorious heritage of this coastal state, located strategically by the Bay of Bengal. Thousands of master craftsmen weave magic with their hands in Odisha. Be it sand art, sculpture, handicrafts, painting, Odisha's skills are legendary. Music and dance are also an integral part of its rich and diverse culture.

Music plays a prime role in Odissi culture. Right from the birth of a child to marriage ceremony, thread ceremony or any such social ceremony, puja or worship of deities, festivals, functions, yajnya rituals social traditions, agricultural events and in every other social events, there is involvement of music. The tribal life of Odisha is also said to be musical. Various (Natyamandap) dance stages built in the temples statues and sculptures of dancers found on the carving of temples, 'Akhada-ghara' of gymnasiums, 'Bhaagabata tungi' which were meant for the 'Purana recitals' are the evidences of Odissi music tradition. The culture of Odisha is lord Sri Jagannath's culture which reflects in the people of Odisha.

Odisha has its indigenous folk music, tribal music, light classical music etc reflecting the beliefs and practices of the ethnic communities. Classical music attained a form of recognition after the 11th century AD in Odisha. Musicologists contend that Odia music is distinct whose ragas and talas are different from what is used in Hindustani and Carnatic music. Odishan music is said to be a fine blend of four classes--Dhrupada, Chitrapada, Chitrakala and Panchal and could be rendered to different talas or beats.

Music was indeed a means to propagate religious faith and belief systems in Odisha.

Odissi dancer is usually accompanied by a musician playing Mardal or Pakhawaj, a flutist and a singer. Mardal 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 them, but as a result of the dance moving on stage and into big halls this mission was taken upon by a professional singer.

In Odissi Sangeet Sastras it is mentioned that among all the skin percussions Mardal 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 Mardal players. Mardalvadini (the woman Mardal player) of Konark is famous. It is played during various Sevass (services) of Lord Jagannath. It is played as an

accompaniment both in Mahari dance as well as Gotipua dance.

The word 'Maadal' means a human body without hands and feet. Since the body shape of this musical instrument is looks like this above described form. It is believed that the name 'Maadal' has been given to this musical-instrument accordingly. Through there has been no specific evidence regarding the Origin of 'Maadal' musical instrument, but this musical instrument, but this musical instrument is considered as one of the most ancient ones.

To play this musical instrument a performer dangles it around his neck or shoulders and then beats the leather portion (Chayaan) with his Right hand while beating its big mouth 'Dheyia' or 'Bayyan' with his left hand and thus played this. The associate performers called 'Bayak' while playing this also uses to play this by keeping it on a floor. This instrument creates rippling sounds. Its musical sounds lasts for quite some time.

Odissi Mardal more or less resembles Pakhawaj but there is also a difference both in terms of construction and technique. The Mardal 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 Mardal so that it can be tuned as per need. In Pakhawaj, for example on the left side a layer of flour is given while in Mardal there is Kiran. As regards to practice and technique the Vaani or Ukuta, Khandi, Gadi Arassa in Mardal are different from those in Pakhawaj. Especially, the Chanti and movement of fingers are quite different in Mardal. Till now Mardal is played mostly as an accompaniment of Odissi dance.

Mardal is a parallel instrument like Pakhawaj and Mrudangam of Hindustani and Karnatak style. Mardal was regularly played in the temple of Lord Jagannath at Puri, the primitive deity. Almost Mardal has been originated from the tribal culture and have been brought Puri with the Lord. In Madala Panji the historical document of the people it is observed that the Lord has resemblance with Mardal < Madal. There is a service in the temple called Madeli Seva like other Nijogas of Lord Jagannath. Those who play Mardal are entitled to Madeli Seva and known as Madeli. Gajapati, the traditional king of Puti offers this Seva (service) to them. On the walls of the famous Sun Temple Konark the picture of Mardal is there. In the temple of Parshurameswar, Lingaraj and Rajarani at Bhubaneswar and many other temples of Odisha Mardal can be seen.

The existence of 'Taal-vadya' (traditional musical instruments) is contemporarily related to the Origin and gradual development of Indian music. Odissi music is one of these Indian-music and the 'Taal-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 'Taal-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' 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' 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.

'Maadal' is one of the important musical instruments of the tribes. On hearing the beating sounds of this musical instrument one's mind gets thrilled and a person spontaneously gets ready for foot-tapping a tune its musical sounds. Both male and female tribal persons use to dance together a tune the musical sounds of 'Maadal' in a rhythmical manner. The tribes belonging to 'Santhal', 'Kolha', 'Koormi' communities of Mayurbhanj and Keonjhar districts mostly are found to play 'Maadals' and besides this the tribes from other communities are also found playing 'Maadals'.

The people of Sundergarh as well as from some other regions of western-Odisha are found using 'Maadal' is not only played on various festive occasions like durga-Puja festival, Kali-Puja festival, Duteebahan puja, Tusu melan(Makar-sankranti) festival, Rasa Purnima festival etc. but also is played along with the tribal dance performances called 'Karama', 'Paanta' and 'Jhoomar' etc. The persons playing maadal mainly belong to a specific community and as per the custom of this community. A few lines after the death of any person of this community, certain last rites are performed for the sanctification or purification of the family members & relatives of the dead person. During this period these community members conduct specific traditional song performance called 'Gayapalla' and 'Maadal' is performed during this specific song performance.

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. Almost as per the same rules, the body of 'Mardal' is described. The body of 'Mardal' is mainly built with the wood derived from the stems of various trees. This musical instrument is usually made of wood derived from 'Khaira' (catetchu), 'Rakta-chandan' (a variety of sandal wood) 'Shisu', Neem or from Jackfruit tree. Normally the length of 'Mardal' instrument is about 22 inches or 24 inches. Its left side measures about 8 to 8.5 inches and the measurement of its Right side is about 6 to 7 inches earlier, the length of 'Mardal' was nearly the length of one and half of a person's arm, and the left side of it measured about 12 to 13 fingers length. And the length of its Right side was slight less than a finger length.

For creating of suitable tunes 'Mardal's 'Gajara' and Goti's are beaten and adjusted with the help of a hammer, as per the requirements. In case of Tabla also this process is followed. But the 'Carnataki Mrudangam' doesn't have any 'Goti' with it. So the 'Gajara' of a 'Mrudangam' is adjusted with hammer strike in order to create high and low tunes. Ri ray tay taw to produce, ri ray or tay 'Baani' Mardal's Right sides middle part of 'Kiran' is to be beaten with the Right hands index- finger. These three 'Barnas' are applied according to the composition of 'Ukuta' or 'Dharan'.

There has also been a tradition of 'Mardal' playing during the performance of 'Goti-pua' and 'Dakhini-aaNrutya' dance forms, which are known as the most ancient dance forms of Odisha. The tradition of 'Mardal' performance along with the performances of popular Odissi songs like 'Geetagovinda' 'Chhanda', 'Champu'song' etc. has been continuing till-date, in several 'Akhada-shaala' (gymnasium), 'Bhagabat-tungi' and several temples situated in some rural areas of Odisha.

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