



USE AND APPLICATION OF ODISSI MUSIC IN GOTIPUA TRADITION

Arts

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ABSTRACT

Odissi music is a unique style of Indian traditional music with all the modules of Indian classical form as like Carnatic and Hindustani. It is necessary to make this form of Indian music to prosper through proper study, revival, propagation, etc. This traditional style of music form is still survived through Odissi and Gotipua dance etc. The traditional music movement of Odisha has taken special drive for reaching at the zenith as like other traditional Indian classical music with traditional Odissi and Gotipua dance. Odissi music involves several genres of songs as well as performances that are structured and composed in different ways depending on the context and function of the performance. The Odissi music of today has evolved from the style of Gotipua music. It retains elements of both Mahari and Gotipua dance and also incorporates the allied art forms of Odisha closely associated with the great Jagannath cult.

KEYWORDS

GOTIPUA, DANCE, ODISSI, MUSIC

Odissi as we know today reflects a process of reconstruction that began after Independence. There are a number of musical instruments used to accompany the Gotipua dance form of Odissi dance. As mentioned, originally Odissi was sung to the dance of the *Mahari/Devadasis* at the Jagannath Temple, and was later sung to the dances by young boys, dressed as girls, known as the *Gotipua* performing Odissi dance. The Odissi music of today has evolved from the style of *Gotipua* music. As an introduction to Odissi music, analyzing its characteristic features for the status of third classical form of Indian music.

Odissi music has the three most essential components necessary to procure the classical status in Indian music. They are, the continuation of a tradition of discussion, improvisation, and presentation of the classical form the music associated with historical integrity (History of a tradition); secondly, the technical aspects of its presentation assembled or coded with precise classical structure for elaboration of the subject (Codifying music); and thirdly, certain significance and/or precise grammatical accuracy of the subject, together.

Apparently, Odissi songs were written even before *Odia* language developed its own flavor. There are certain authentic and authoritative texts on Odissi music which are excellent indices to the development of the music. These are written in Sanskrit or *Odia* and are presented in the beginning of this chapter. It seemed all most all *Odia* poets of medieval period were well-versed in music and had used *Raga* and *Rhythm* to beautify their poem compositions. One cannot but acknowledge that Odissi is classical if he goes through the lyrical poems written by Kaviraj, Sri Jayadeva, Kavi Samrat Upendra Bhanja, Banamali, Kavisurya Baladev Rath, Gopal Krushna Patanaik and many others.

Music being a performing art form, more comes orally than written. This oral tradition makes the art further more dynamic and this dynamism makes the Art form more popular. Odissi music has been retrieved, modified, and restored through both oral and literary codification with poet Jayadeva's *Gita Govinda* as the unique inspiration and fundamental strength. One should admit that the Odissi style of music has undergone a lot of modifications as it is being nurtured and given platforms to be performed and propagated.

Odissi (Udra) dance is an independent system among the ancient seven distinctive forms of classical dance. The seven forms of dances namely *Magadhi*, *Sauraseni*, *Karanata*, *Kerala*, *Gouda*, *Panchanada* and *Udra* are mentioned in *Abhinaya Chandrika* of Maheswar Mohapatra. This goes to corroborate that Udra dance is independent and the accompanying components like vocal and instrumental music are also distinctive.

Odissi vocal has all the parameters to be reckoned as classical form. The whole hearted support and participation of the Government, concerned organizations, musicians, listeners and conscious public, together are essential to acquire its well-deserved recognition. There should be an all-out effort to rediscover, preserve and promote the

musical ethos and bestow this rich legacy of Odissi classical music to our successors. More seminars and workshops should be conducted emphasizing on the classicism of Odissi vocal and instrumental music. The Odissi music is the characteristics of Udrmagadhni style, one of the significant branches among Indian classical music forms. The music of Odisha has carried a glorious tradition with the onset of the composition of *Gita Govinda* by *Odia* poet Jayadeva.

Further, the scholars of Odissi dance, the indigenous classical dance form of Odisha, based on Odissi music probably have not prioritized the impact and significance of it as the soul structure of the dance form. Like any other visual form of art, Odissi dance was easily acceptable by diverse audience and could attain the Classical status with its wide and frequent performances, both inside and outside of the country. However, Odissi music being an Oral art form in *Odia* language to be perceived and received has still mostly remained confined to state and could not be professed yet in the outside world as a distinct form of classical music.

The songs sung by the Gotipuas are generally the compositions of Vaishnava poets of Odisha like Kabisurya Baladev Rath, Kabisamrat Upendra Bhanja, Gopalakrushna, Dinakrushna and Banamali etc. According to Dr. Mayadhar Mansingh, one of the greatest poets and educationists Odisha ever had, mentioned in his article published in 'Marg' in 1960 that "Of many of these composers of Radha Krishna songs three dominate the field. They are Kavisurya Baladev Rath, Gopalakrishna Patnaik and Banamali Das. Of this trinity Kabisurya is the most musical, Gopal Krishna the most poetic and Banamali the most devotional. The Gotipuas also perform on the varied musical aspects of Odissi i.e. Chhanda, Champu, Chaupadi and Chautisa etc. It is these Gotipuas who not only sustained the Odissi musical tradition through their performances but also carried forward and popularized the Odissi songs.

Musical instruments like Odissi Mardal, Tabla Violin, Harmonium and Gini (Cymbals) were being used. It is known that Odissi Mardal has been used continuously since 1956. Even Veena and Kendera (stringed instrument) were originally used and the Paliás (co-singers) were accompanying in singing with Gotipuas. It is because of strong initiative taken by the illustrious singer and erudite musician Singhari Shyam Sundar Kar amply supported by and truly followed by a galaxy of Gotipua teachers and Gurus and scholars, the Odissi Songs got refined which appealed common masses.

Odissi, one of eight Indian 'classical' dances, was officially codified in 1958 through the formation of Jayantika, a group of gurus and scholars who came together in the mid-twentieth century.⁴ However, this fact is often elided in historical and national narratives of the dance that invoke a seamless trajectory back to antiquity citing both sculptural and scriptural evidence. The Odissi of today is described as drawing on the traditions of the *Maharis*, the female temple dancers, and the *Gotipuas*, male dancers. The *Maharis* participated in temple rituals as early as the ninth century ad, and their presence continued

until the sixteenth century. By the twentieth century, the practice of their dance had declined and they found it extremely hard to survive. The *Gotipuas*, who performed dressed as women, came into existence during the seven- tenth century.⁵ Unlike the *Maharis*, they were not affiliated with the temple but with *Akhadas*/gymnasiums. The practice of this form of the dance moved to the *akhadas* and its practitioners also became known as *Akhadapilas* or boys of the *Akhada*. Although the *Gotipuas* came to be associated with temple events and *Vaishnavism* through their song and dance, unlike the *Maharis* they never performed inside the temple .

How exactly the Gotipua dance tradition in Orissa came into being approximately four hundred years ago, is still unclear because of a paucity of historical material. While there is, therefore, very little reliable published information, there is a vibrant oral tradition about the Gotipua's history in the villages around Puri, where many troupes function.

The boys were to be dressed as *Maharis* and taught to sing and dance in a similar manner. Once instituted, the Gotipua dancing was performed on many festive occasions in the *Maths* .and monasteries, for the palace, as well as for rich landowners and noblemen; despite this, they were never entitled to do any *Sevapuja* or *Niti* (services and rituals) in the Jagannath temple. Till the 1950s, when the last *maharis* still performed occasionally in the Jagannath temple, there were some opportunities for Gotipua gurus and students to see the *Mahari* dance. The *Maharis* taught “adopted daughters” at home, and sometimes, young Gotipuas were also sent to the *Mahari's* house to learn dance. It was not uncommon for older *Maharis* to be invited to the *Maths* and other public places as guests of honour to witness performances of Gotipua dance in Puri. These became opportunities for the older *Maharis* to teach and exchange ideas with the Gotipua gurus, thereby transmitting the ritual dance of the Jagannath temple to this newer tradition, less fettered by ritual observances and, therefore, more accessible to the public. Gotipua gurus have also, on occasions, been known to invite the *Maharis* to come and teach their troupes, with the permission of the *sehineyokes*,” The gymnasiums are still active centers in Puri and its surrounding villages. In contradiction to the above accounts, when members of the Barabati Akhada in Puri were interviewed recently, they maintained that these centres had always been men's clubs for fitness, wrestling and weight training only. The cultural activities that occurred within these complexes were' plays and *Sahi yatras* performed by men, which required them to wear heavy wooden frames that supported masks of different deities. There was, therefore, no place for “female dancing” by Gotipuas emulating the *Maharis*. These comments are not surprising as very little is known about the Gotipua tradition by many of its own practitioners, and the public. It also helps overcome the unfortunate common perception that any change in the tradition (which is essential for its future growth), is synonymous with tampering with ancient, sacrosanct conventions. The only difference in the way *Chowk*, a pivotal body position common to both the Gotipua and Odissi traditions, is articulated is that in Odissi it has a greater degree of conscious control and deliberation. Odissi standardized its measurements and maintained them, while the Gotipua *Chowk* remained less meticulously disciplined. The Gotipua repertoire also worked with a limited palette of hand gestures, which are not as clearly defined and articulated as seen now in Odissi. Equally, feet positions are less clearly articulated and have a smaller range in the Gotipua tradition. It is principally due to this lack of clarity/rigidity in how the body is used that the Gotipua tradition is regarded as “folk,” whilst Odissi is regarded as “classical.” The repertoire of Odissi music consists of several genres of songs, and performances too may be structured in several different ways depending on the context and function of the performance Odissi and Gotipua dance since ancient period till today.

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