



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Arts

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS OF ODISHAN PERFORMING FOLK ART

KEY WORDS: FOLK, MUSIC, INSTRUMENT, ODISHA, TRADITION

Dr. Krushna Chandra Das

Guest Faculty In P.g.department of Hindustan Violin, Utkal University of Culture, Bhubaneswar

ABSTRACT

The traditions of dance, plays and music in Odisha, is as rich as the cultural traditions of Odisha. There has been the prevalence of various folk musical instruments in Odishan folk art tradition. These types of musical instruments have been classified into four categories. These four categories are Tat, Ghana, Abanaddha and Soosir. As it is difficult to know about the evidences regarding the origin of music likewise it is also not easy to know the facts related to the origin of folk musical instruments is also a tough task. The ancient Odia literature, the sculpture and architecture of Odisha helps us to know about various folk musical instruments and their use. Various folk songs have also been prevalent in different districts of Odisha. The prevalence of various types of folk songs along with the folk musical instruments are found, especially in the districts of Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Koraput, Sambalpur, Kalahandi etc.

It would be appropriate to say that the folk songs are like the mementos which live in numerous hearts of the people. Folk music is meant for the recreation and entertainment of people. This music is a companion in one's daily routine. At times we come across some people who sing out of joy or spontaneously for example, a farmer while ploughing his field use to sing a song or when a carter use to sing a rustic song while driving a cart. This is what we called folk song. Actually the folk songs are full of Rasa. Hence it has become rich by representing the human hopes, thoughts and experience. Apart from this folk music can be divided into two categories one is community and the other one is individual. The folk songs sung by farmers, Bullock cart drivers, boatmen etc. can be categorized as the individual folk song and the folk songs used during the *Danda nacha*, *Patua*, *Ghoda nacha*, *Ogal-geeta* etc. can be categorized as community or group folk songs. Deenakrushna Das and Upendra Bhanja were the pioneers of Reeti Sahitya. These two famous poets have provided us the knowledge about the then prevalent musical instruments and have also enhanced our Odishan tradition of musical instruments. As it has been mentioned in the Chhanda's (lyrical stanzas) of *Rasa-kallol* and *Jagamohan Ramayan* about the then prevalent musical instruments like – Benu, Kaahaali, Kara-Taala, Banshi, Mardal, Beena, Rabaa, Taala, Upaanga, Swaramandal, Brahmabeena, Shankha, Mahoori, Bheri, Dosari etc. The tradition of Odia-music excelled much during the period of the great poet, Kabi Samrat Upendra Bhanja.

There was a widespread propagation of Ragas raaginis and the musical instruments during this period. The literature of *Bhanja-sahitya* had a specific mention of the musical instruments such as : Beena, Mardal, Meghaa, Taala, Kansaala, Kaahaali, Bheri, Mahoori, Dambaru, Ghanti, Amruti, Doondoobhi, Veera-changu, Naagra, Ram-Taali, Toori, Ghanta, Shankha etc. Besides this the *Nathapanthee* sages (the followers of Naath group) used to play Kendara musical instrument while singing *Nirguna* Bhajan (the devotional songs in praise of almighty) and the pictures of Kendra instrument found in the sculptures of Utkal, evident about the Utkalian tradition of musical-instruments. This process of playing musical-instruments is believed to be about one thousand years old. By performing traditional Ghoomora dance, Kendara songs, Jodi-shankha, Ghanta, Mrudanga, Mardal, Odissi-kirtan (devotional songs), Telingi-badya, Mahoori, Nageswari, Jodi naagara, Ghoda naacha-geeta, Gopala's Ogala- songs, 'Patua-dance, Dhooduki songs, Khanjani- songs and Danda songs and dance, etc. The Utkal people have added splendor to their glorious tradition.

Odisha is mainly a rural based state. The education and literacy rate is not so high here. Hence from this point of view the position of folk music and folk musical instruments has

much significance here. The farmers, labourers and daily wagers when return to their respective homes after a tire some daily work, prefer to relax in the places of recreation like library, *Chaupadhi-house*, *Akhada-ghara* (a village gymnasium), *Bhagabata-tungi* (a public room where sacred book of Bhagawat is read out). It is the folk music which fulfills the aspirations of these working class people to a great extent. The folk music one, which acts like a companion in one's work and which stays along with one's religion, can also be a source of joy for those who practise music and can also be a treat to the audience. The following informations are about some folk songs of Odisha.

Palla is a folk-art of Odisha. The Palla performance has a mass appeal among the people and audience. Palla is a popular medium through which the audience are enabled to understand the difficult contents of various literature and myths and the language of Palla performers are simpler and familiar. For this it is a popular folk-art. A whole troupe performs music harmoniously. For performance of 'Palla' the musical instruments like Chamar, Jhanja, Mrudanga, Ginni etc. are essential. Likewise some folk songs which are performed especially at places, at times and on festive occasions are namely 'Halia-geeta' *Nauria-geeta*, *Kuanra-punein geeta* and *Raja doli geeta* are most popular. But some folk-songs of our state like *Dhaga-dhamali* (proverbial songs), *Kaandana* (a typical song in form of crying act done on occasions), *Dhobageeta* (sung by washermen community) etc. are on the verge of extinction. There is yet another form of folk-song called Ropa, which is prevalent in this region are habituated in singing a type of song. Farmers, while sowing rice-seeds in agriculture lands (which is called *Ropan* in Odia) use to sing this type of song and enjoy themselves. This song is very enjoyable for the listeners. This is popular as *Ropa-geeta*. The language of this song is not completely Odia but this is heard in various languages also. Another type of dance called Jhankaapuri is also performed. A group of female dancers or male dancers use to perform this form of dance by remaining in a circle shape. Those who join this type of group dance are made acquainted with speed steps style of this dance. All the members of this dance troupe use to perform uniformly and harmoniously. While performing the song and dance, all the troupe members concentrate to move in a crescent shape as a whole, and the song that they sing has a distinct language. Normally the common people are use to perform this type of dance and song. This is composed in Odia language along with a mixed combination of some different language. The dance of this performance requires the playing of musical instruments like, Maddal, Dhol, Kathi etc.

As we find today that various drama stage rehearshals are done before the durga-puja festival, similarly the rehearshals of Dasaaen dance are done at some places of North Odisha.

Atleast a week before of puja this dance ia usually rehearsed. Though this dance is performed by a group, but there is no specific rule as regards the number of this dance troupe may vary. These performers use mettalic utensils like bowls, plates, gong as the musical instruments. They also use *Bhuanga* musical instrument, made eitherfrom bamboo or of dried gourd. Farce is prevalent in North-Odisha region. Two artists usually are required for this performance and dance is also done during this performance. At times, male artists also perform the female roles. Questions and answers and arguments like acts are done through singing, which is the speciality of this performance. The Farce which is enacted, concludes maximumly within 20 minutes. At times a male artist, being well dressed plays a Dhol or Madal which is put around his shoulders and male artist in guise of a female use to dance during this performance.the song of Faarce is melodious and has simple tunes. Yet another form of folkdance has been prevalent in the Balasore district which is popularly called as Ghodamelana. *Ghoda nata* is mainly performed by *Kaiabarta* (fisherman community) people. These fishermen use to make a dummy harse from the slice pieces of bamboo, and a horse head made from mud clay is attached to this bamboo made dummy horse.by holding this horse head a person use to dance. Like this several similar land made dummy horses are brought to a fair called Ghodamelan. The main deity of Bhaadraak is called *Bhadrakali*. The Ghodamelon is organized every year near *Bhadrakali Sahi* (lane) and near *Nuananda* area. While celebrating this fair, various musical instruments like Dhol, Dholki, Kansal, Ghaanta etc. are played. This Chaitee Tamsa folk play was composed by an eminent and talented poet of Bhaadrak, named Banshi Ballav Boswami, possibly during the period of 18th century. For performance of this play a stage need to be erected. It is not done in an open air stage. The audience irrespective of caste and community enjoy to view this and it is mainly performed before the front portion of a shive temple. The musical instruments like Dholki, Jhanja, Shankha(conch), Ghanta etc. are played during this performance. Ghumura is praised across Odisha and across India and across the world as well. It has also enriched the folk dance tradition of Odisha. Ghumura is also an identity of Kalahandi district. This is known as a *Veera vadya* which means it represents valour and bravery of the warriors or when played, it boosts the morale of our soldiers. As per our tradition during battle time Ghumura ia played along with the musical instruments like Mahoori, Kahali, Mardal etc. In order to boost the morale of soldiers. The sounds created by this musical instrument enhance the spirit of weak persons and brings out a feeling of strength and energy among the warriors. It can create a feeling of fear among the enemies. In the past, during the rule of *Rajas and Maharajas* (kings and emperors) this musical instrument was approved as the military musical instrument. So as per the directions of the then rulers Ghumura was played during the battle time. As per the tradition the Ghumura performers first perform the puja rituals of Ghumura on the auspicious day of *Chitalagi amabasya* and from then onwards practise Ghumura every evining and starting from the day of Nuakhai festival to *Vijaya dashami* festival they use to perform Ghumura at different places. Today the prevalence of Ghumura is not only limited within the tribal dominated regions. But also has spread in many non tribal regions. This is familiar as a Taala vadya musical instrument.

Hence in order to make the musical Instruments more interesting various experiments have been done from time to time. After undergoing several experiments all these above said folk musical instruments of Odisha have now been enlisted as the special section of musical instruments of Odishan folk art tradition.

REFERENCES

1. Bhattacharyya, Dipakchandra : Folk-arts and Crafts of India; Bulletin, Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Vol. XVII (1), 1966.
2. Das, M.N. (ed.): Sidelights on History and Culture of Odisha, Cuttack, 1977.

3. Mishra, P.K. & Samal, J.K. eds. : *Comprehensive History and Culture of Orissa, Vol-1,2,3*, New Delhi: Kavery Books, 1997.
4. Mitra, R.L : *Antiquities of Orissa, Yol-L*, New Delh: Today and Tomorrow Publications, 1986.
5. Mukherji, Prabhat: *The History of Medieval Vaishnavism in Odisha*, Calcutta, 1940.
6. Mohan S.R.: *Odia Sahitya, Kala O Sanskruti*, Publisher, Sahadeva Pradhan, Friends Publishers, Binod Bihari, Cuttack, 1997.
7. Pradhan, S. ed. : *Orissan History, Culture and Archeology*, D.K.Print World, New Delhi, 1999.