

The String Instruments In The Folk Music Of Odiṣā- A Brief Study

Sāradā Prasan Dās*

Odiṣā is one of the 29 states of India. It is bounded by the Bay of Bengal in the east, West Bengal in the north east, Jharkhand in the north, Chhattisgarh in the west and Andhra Pradesh in the south. Odiṣā is a village dominated state and surrounded with natural beauties. The people of Odiṣā, especially the people living in rural area are so much fond of music. Because folk music is a strong medium to easily express the human feeling, so that the people of this state like folk music very much, especially the people of southern and western region of this state are very much fond of folk music. They cannot think to celebrate any festival without music; even it would not be superficial to say that music is the part of their daily routine life. For an example I would like to present a reference here which I observed during my field survey, that there is a hut in most of villages which is use to call Bhāgavata Tuṅgi or Ākhaḍā Ghara in Odiā language. The villagers (mostly the male villagers) use to gather in that place in every evening for the relaxation after their daily routine life, where music helps them to get relax. At that place they use to listen the holy chanting of Bhagavad-gītā and Rāmāyaṇa etc. and after this session, they use to sing many folk songs and they express their feelings, emotions through music in a small gathering. This why folk music is the medium where someone express their devotion to god where as other express their love to nature, someone express the love for his beloved as other one express the sorrow for split up.

‘Folk music is a kind of music originating from the ordinary people of a region or nation and continued by oral tradition.’¹

Even in Odiṣā, the folk music is another option for beggars and jogīs to begging. People of Odiṣā in different cast and community also love

to do enjoy music. The folk musicians of Odiṣā use many ancient musical instruments to make their music and dance more beautiful and adorable.

‘The term “Vādyā” (musical instrument) is derived from the Sanskrit prefix “Bad” which means “Speak”. So “Vādyā” defines an instrument which speaks or can be made to speak’²; hence instrument takes an important role in overall music.

Musical instruments of all kinds and categories were invented by the exponents of the different times and places, but for the technical purposes a systematic-classification of these instruments was deemed necessary from the ancient time. ‘It was Bharatmunī, who first classified the four types of instruments in his Nāṭyaśāstra.

Bharatmuni divided all the instruments in four groups namely- Tata Vādyā (String Instrument), Susira Vādyā (Blown Air Instrument), Avanaddha Vādyā (Percussion Instrument) and Ghana Vādyā [Nonmembranousive Instrument (Metal Made Instrument)].³

There are two categories for ‘Tata Vādyā’, those instruments in which the strings are played with strokes with help of a plectrum are called ‘Tata Vādyā’ (Stroked String Instrument) and the other one, in which the strings are plaed with a ‘Bow’ are called ‘Vītata Vādyā’ (Bowed String Instrument).

‘When we look upon the Vedic period we find that “Vīṇā” the famous sting instrument, being mentioned for the first time in Rig-Veda, the first Vedic scripture. According to many legends in Vedic period one common term ‘Vīṇā’ was used for all kind of string instruments and all the string instruments are indisputably the changed and the enhanced forms of “Vīṇā”, which has gone through development for thousands of years to reach its present form.’⁴

In this research paper I would like to present a small documentation of some folk string instruments of Odiṣā. Because folk string instruments are found to be very rare among the entire folk Instruments of Odiṣā.

GHUDUKI:-‘Ghuduki Nāṭa is one of the most entertaining folk performing art form of Odiṣā. As the musical instrument Ghuduki serves the accompaniment with the song and dance, the form has been named as Guduki Nāma. Songs sang in the performance is known as Ghuduki songs. Ghuduki is a string instrument. Its presence is quite prominent in the coastal districts of Odiṣā. The tribes of southern Odiṣā are also use to play this instrument. As on today also the Ghuduki players are seen

*Research Scholar, Department of Instrumental Music, Faculty of Performing Arts, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi

begging by playing Ghuduki in different places. In Odiā poetics several coupādis (couplets with four lines) have been written which is known as Dhuduki Coupādi or Ghuduki Coupādi. Its existence is there in other states and it is known as Ānanda Lahari and Gān-Gubā-Gun in West Bengal, Khamak in Bangladesh, Bugucu in Punjab, Premtāl in Hindi Jāmidika in Telugu, Chonkā in Marathi, Guk Chābi in Bihar and Dhug Tugi in Assam.

NAMING:-Most probably according to the sound it produces like a “Ghudu Ghudu” or ‘Dhudu Dhudu’ it has been named so. Some opine that the ancient name was Ghuduki and the term Dhuduki came later after being transformed.

The ancient Odiā poet Śārāla Dās in his Mahabharat mentions about 64 types of musical instruments out of which Ghuduki is one.

TEXTURE:-To manufacture Ghuduki these tools are needed- one cylindrical wood or mature gourd of 7"-8" long and 17" of diameter, iguana skin, 6"-7" long and 2"-3" diameter bamboo stick, nylon thread of 2" long, ankle bells (Ghungru) and gum.

PLAYING TECHNIQUE:-Ghuduki is played on being pressed in the left arm pit. To have the precaution one thread loop is also provided which prevents it from falling as the loop is placed round the shoulder. The player holds tight the nylon thread in the left hand and create a vibration to stroking the nylon thread by holding a mango seed shell or a plectrum in his right hand. The player plays many rhythmic compositions in the Ghuduki according to the song and dance.⁵

Tuilā:-Tuilā is a tribal instrument, especially the tribes of Mayurbhañja district use to play Tuilā as an accompany instrument to make their music more presentable. The sound produced through this instrument is of low intensity and does not carry to a longer distance. The Karamā songs are played well on this instrument.

NAMING:-As per the general belief “Tuilā/Tuilāu” got its name from the basic note of ‘TUN TUN’ that is produced on it. But some Tuilā players have different explanation which seemed more logical. According to them, in the local dialect “TUI” means the thatch roof of a hut and ‘LĀU’ means the gourd of the creeper plant, which is raised on this kind of roof. The Cell of this gourd is one of the major components of this instrument. Hence this terminology “TUILĀU” latter become “TUILĀ”.

TEXTURE:-To manufacture Ghuduki these tools are needed- A mature gourd, a median stick of the instrument, which is of an arm length of the player and string.

PLAYING TECHNIQUE:-“TUILĀ” is played using both the hands. The instrument is hold, with the left hand pressing it against the left chest with the bridge facing downwards. While the fingers of the left-hand act as reeds on the string by pressing on it, vibration is created (Notes generated) by plucking the string with the middle finger of the right hand. The index finger of the right hand touches the string when plucking it with the middle finger generating a twang. Since there is a hole in the gourd base it acts like a sounding board. If the man playing it in bare body, the sweat from the bare body moistens the base and makes the sound heavy and basal. In a single scale it produces one and a half complete set of notes like ‘Sā, Re, Ga, Ma, Pa, Dhā, Ni, Sā’, Re’, Ga’, Ma’, Pa’. To play the higher notes one has to lift the gourd base from the chest. The gourd base can be loosen or tighten by twisting it. With a loose base the vibration is more.

As a point of note, people were not playing the notes on this instrument to produce different music rather they were going straight onto play the single song- “Chālogo chālogo Bāigon Bādite...” The tune of this song is adopted most in the “Karamā” Songs.

DEKĀ:-Dekā is extensively used by the Desiā Kandha tribal community of Odiśā. These people are seen in the hinter lands of the district of Phulabāni. This stringed folk musical instrument is strikingly similar in construction with classical stringed instrument Rudra Vīnā. The instrument is the part and parcel of the Desiā Kandha culture. In each and every festival this tribal community use to play Dekā as an accompany instrument. Dekā is made out of two gourds, a bamboo stick and steel wires which are played by striking the wires. Besides its presence in Odiśā it is also seen in Rājasthān and known as ‘Jantar’.

NAMING:-Very little information exists regarding the origin of the instrument. In Kui language (language of the Desiā Kandha) Dekā means to lift or lifting. According to the Deshia Kandha community of Phulbani district, as the instrument is played on being lifted, it has been named so in local terms. As such, Naming might have the origin from PLAYING TECHNIQUE in colloquial terms the naming the instrument as Dekā seems more justifiable.

TEXTURE:-The materials required to construct a Dekā are gourd of two numbers, a bamboo staff of about one and half feet length, gum of Honey, bone of Stag or wood, thin iron wire of about three meters length, pieces of bamboo sticks and horse hair.

THE PLAYING TECHNIQUE:-The instrument is hold with both the hands supporting the gourds on the chest. While the index finger of the right hand is used to pull or pluck the string. The finger on the left hand are pressed over the reeds to form different notes. A pull on the string sets off a twang. The middle finger of the left hand is rarely used in playing. The tension on the string is adjusted by proper setting at the pegs. The player either sits or stands while playing the instrument. Some artists also play it while dancing.

GOPIYANTRA/ JOGIYANYTA:-Gopiyatra happens to be one stringed instrument and can be played by creating vibration with the string. Persons from a particular community play this instrument while begging. It is profusely found in the coastal districts of Odiśā. In Odiśā many jogis use to play this instrument while they are begging therefore many people knows this instrument as jogiyatra. Some call it as Ektārā and the songs accompanying it are known as Ektārā Bhajana. But Ektārā and Gopiyatra are two different musical instruments. Ektārā is having tuning only where as Gopiyatra is having both tuning and rhythm. Besides Odiśā, Gopiyatra is found in the states like West Bengal and Assam. In Odiśā we have two types of Gopiyatras of which one type is having the resonator made out of bottle gourd and other type is made out of wood. But playing technique of both the instruments are similar.

In Bengal it is known as Gopichānda and ‘Tuntunā’ is somehow similar with that of Gopiyatra .

NAMING:-No authentic proof is available regarding Naming of the instrument. But Odiśān folk-lore mentions about its creation in Dwāpar Yuga. As the Gopis were playing it for which it has been named so.

TEXTURE:-There are two types of Gopiyatras i.e Gourd Gopiyatra and wooden Gopiyatra.

To manufacture Gopiyatra particularly the peg one seasoned rounded gourd or about 10" to 1m long, 2m circumference and about 1" diameter of wood log, one bamboo stick of 2/2m-6" long and of 5" circumference with a node at one end, 6" long bamboo on wooden piece for the peg, iguana skin, steel wire about 3' long, one copper coin and gum are necessary.

PLAYING TECHNIQUE:-The two types of Gopiyatra can be played differently with different placements. It can be played horizontally or perpendicularly on being held in the left or right hand. The vibration is created by the string with the fingers and rhythm is maintained by pressing

or releasing the bamboo stripes. The adjustable knob helps the player to coincide with his voice the tuning of the instrument.

BHUĀNG:-The Sāntāl, Kolhās and Mundā tribes of Odiśā plays an unique instrument which name is Bhuāng. Bhuāng is mostly found in Mayurbhañja, Kendujhar, Sundargarh and Bāleśvara districts of Odiśā. People of this region use to play Bhuāng as an accompany instrument in their music. During Daśaarā festival a particular dance performance named ‘Daśāen’ accompany this instrument.

NAMING:-All the musical instruments have been named after its construction, sound and use. When Bhuāng is played Bhun Bhun sound is produced out of it. According to the sound it generates, the name of the instrument has come in to being as such.

TEXTURE:-Bhuāng is being manufactured from a large and long bottle gourd. The inner content of the gourd is cleaned. The circumference of the gourd should be 2 to 2 ½". A bamboo stick-of 4' long is tied to the stalk of the gourd. One side of the stick is fitted with a small wooden unit shaped as English alphabet ‘L’ and the other end point of the bamboo is fitted with a small bamboo knob. Then some Śiāli creeper is tied as the string (now days the Śiāli thread is replaced with nylon). Then news paper or any colour paper is pasted over the instrument for an elegant look.

PLAYING TECHNIQUE:-This is an accompanying instrument. The player holds bamboo in left hand by pointing the gourd side to the ground. Then he vibrates the string with the rhythm and the required sound is created.

BENĀ:-The instrument Benā is widely used in Bolāngir and Sambalapur districts of western Odiśā.

NAMING:-Characteristically it resembles the Vīnā, so that in Sambalpuri dialect the name Vīnā is transformed to “Benā”. Secondly it is also called Dabs Gunia as it is played by the people of the specified sect.

TEXTURE:-The materials of constructing the Instrument are gourd, bamboo, ghungru, hide, honey gum, thread and wooden pegs etc.

PLAYING TECHNIQUE:-The instrument is held by the left hand pressing the gourd base against the left chest. The Bamboo staff is held using the right hand palm and thumb finger. Sound is produced by twitching the string using the index, middle and ring finger of the right hand. The pitch of the sound is varied by pressing the string over the reeds using the fingers of the left hand.

KENDARĀ:-Kendarā is a bowed string instrument (Vitata Vādyā) and it is profusely seen in the Dhenkānāla, Anugul and coastal districts of Odiśā. The Jogīs of Odiśā mostly play Kendarā and earn their livelihood while begging. But with advent of the modern musical instruments this instrument is facing serious extinction and of late not much is seen playing this instrument. The, tribes of Korāput, Phulbāni and Mayurbhañja districts also play Kendarā but their instrument is little different from the coastal area instruments.

NAMING:-This folk musical instrument mainly produces melancholic notes. According to some Kendarā players, before the name of this instrument was Kanduni because the sound of this instrument is very similar to the crying sound of human baby. But nowadays the name Kānduni is converted to Kendarā.

There is mention of Kendarā In the great epics like Rāmāyana and Mahābhārata. It is a known story that Raven being disguised as a Jogī with a Kendarā in hand had abducted Sītā. The Sidha Jogīs like Kahnupā, Hadipā and Luipā etc. were playing Kendarā as an accompanying instrument to the Jogī cult. In Odiśān folk literature there is mention of king Govindachandra who in order to conquer death embraced the life of a Jogī who roamed with a Kendarā and begging bowl. Though the existence of Kendarā was much earlier the only mention found after 7th century A.D.

TEXTURE:-To construct a Kendarā the articles required are a half Coconut shell, a bamboo stick of 12" long and 4' diameter, iguana skin, gum, horse tail hair of 40 stripes of 12' to 14" long and 40 stripes of 8 to 10" long, one wooden knob of 5" long, a bent wooden bow of 10 to 12" long and some white resin.

PLAYING TECHNIQUE:-The player holds the Instrument in his left hand at the adjustable knob end and presses the coconut shell aids to his left color bone and holds the bow in right hand then rubs the horse tail hair with the same fitted to the main Instrument. The tuning adjustment is being done by the adjustable knob. To have a smooth playing with the desired tuning the white resin is applied to the hairs of the bow which prevents the displacement.⁶

References

- 1 www.dictionary.com/browse/folk-music
- 2 Singh Dr. Sangeeta, Uttar Bharatiya sangeet mei tantra vadyo ka than evam upayogita, page no 10, Kanishk publisher, New Delhi.
- 3 Mahadik Dr. Prakash, Sangeet kala Vihar, Page no 29, May 2001.

- 4 Singh Thakur Jayadev, Bharatiya Sangeet ka Etahas, Page no 175, Vishwavidhyalaya Prakashan, Varanasi.
- 5 Personal interview from some Ghuduki players of Odisha and from the book Folk musical instruments of Odisha, Lenka Santosh, Natya Chetana, Bhubaneswar.
- 6 Collected datas through the personal interviews from some Tuila players, Deka players, Gopijantra players, Bhuang players, Bena players, Kendara players and from many other folk artists of Odisha.

