



## Triptych Of Indian Classical Music

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Odissi music like Odissi dance originated in Odissa or Odisha. 1 Odisha is also known in ancient Indian history as Kalinga and Utkala. Kalinga means (*Kala* = art + *anga* = limb)"the land with various arts as its limbs". Utkal means (*Utkrista* = excellent + *kala* = art), "the land which excels in arts." Thus from hoary past Orissa was famous for its excellence in various forms of arts. Various visual as well as performing arts of Orissa, such as, Odissi patta painting, Orissan temple architecture and Odissi dance as well as music claim special and distinct place in the great Indian heritage.

Besides being called Kalinga and Utkala Orissa is also otherwise known as Odra Desha, the Country of Odras or Udras (Oriyas). From the territorial point of view, in ancient history modern South Orissa was known as Kalinga while north and north-east Orissa were known as Utkala and Odra. Modern Western Orissa was known as Kangoda. In due course, the above said regions at different periods of history were amalgamated by different kind of rulers, such as Hindu kings, Muslim, British and modern rulers.

According to Dr. H. K. Mahatab, "in the course of time the Odra and the Utkala tribes became merged into one. It might have been that one race completely extirpated the other or in the natural course of time they united into one. After that, began the gradual fusion of the Utkalas and Kalingas into one people." 2 The Odras and Kalingas found profuse mention in *Ramayan*, *Mahabharata*, *Manusamhita*, *Natyasastra* of Bharata and various *Puranas* and religious texts of ancient India. The areas of the Modern Orissa is 155782 square kilometers. It has a population of a little more than 31,512,070 (as per the census of 1991) out of which men and women almost equal in number (Men 15,979,904 and Women 15,532,166). Literacy among men is 62.37 while that among women is 34.40. The dominant culture of the state, popularly called, Odissi culture is actually represented by the caste Hindus of the plains. It has a vast coast-line

along Bay of Bengal. It is situated on the east cost of India on the borderline of North India and South India.

Odisha's geographical situation itself makes it an interesting converging point, where cultural influences from north and south have for centuries intersected. For a long period also a large portion of Orissa was under Marhatta rulers. So this was also a meeting ground of western India and Eastern India. It has also the distinction of being the meeting place of three cultures: Aryan, Dravidian and Mundari (Tribal), corresponding to the three major ethnolinguistic sections of Indian population. The interplay of these cultures for a considerable period of time gave Orissa a typically synthetic culture.

*Harivamsa Purana* describes the lineage of the earliest Aryan Emperor Baivaswata Manu. Manu had ten sons and a daughter. The kingdom of Manu was divided among the children. Daughter Illa received South Kosala (Present Western Orissa spreading into the Chhotnagpur Plateau) and the kingdom upto river Godavari in the south. Illa had four sons. When her kingdom was subdivided, her third son received Utkal which was named after him. This geneology, whether supported by history or just mythological, atleast symbolically hints at the fact that ancient Orissa shared the North Indian Aryan Culture. But during the reign of the Ganga Dynasty (9th century to 15th Century A.D.) whose founders came from South India there was a marriage of Aryan culture of the Kesharis with Dravidian culture of the Gangas. Orissa remained the meeting ground of north and south for a long time since the kingdom of Orissan rulers spread over a vast area for centuries linking river Ganges in the north with Godavari in the South. This synthesis of culture from various regions and various socio-linguistic groups is reflected in Orissan architecture, sculpture, painting, dance as well as music.

Odissi dance is famous all over the world. In its pristine form it is also invariably accompanied by Odissi music. <sup>3</sup> Many lovers of Odissi music grumble that while Odissi dance has gained the classical status, Odissi music is yet to be known outside Orissa, let alone get classical status. But the question naturally arises: Whether the music accompanying a classical dance can automatically claim classical status .

After Odissi dance was accepted as a classical dance form, vigorous arguments were put forward through a number of seminars and symposia for and against the claims of Odissi music for classical status. Main objective of this dissertation is to examine those claims and counter-claims putting it on the background of a broad spectrum of the tradition of Indian classical music systems.

Late Jeevan Pani, the eminent musicologist and previous director of Kathak Center, Delhi examining this issue held the view that a Regional music style can get classical status when it will have following characteristics, namely, (i) this should have hundred years old tradition, (ii) this tradition should follow one or more than one written sastra (iii) this system should have its own original ragas (iv) the presentation style have uniqueness.

Odissi music has a tradition of six hundred years as Jaydev's Geetgovindam which was written in 12th century is still sung and sung in the same age old style in Jagannath temple of Puri. As regards to sastra (treatise) , Sangeet Kaumudi, the earliest available Odissi sastra was written in 15th century while the most popular Odissi

sastra Sangeet Narayan was written in 17th century. Thus Odissi' s sastra Parampara is also fairly old. Besides, as shown above it has many original ragas and has also uniqueness in the style of presentation.

Thus Odissi music satisfies all the conditions usually laid down to test the sastriya foundation of a music system. As we found out in spite of differences Hindustani, Carnatic and Odissi music systems follow the grammar of raga padhati. Odissi is inclined more towards Carnatic music rather than towards Hindustani as far as presentation style is concerned. But in the theoretical aspects, Odissi music follows more or less the Hindustani Music system. so it can be consider as a **tridhara** music(third music system) system of India.

### NOTES

1. 'Odissa' was pronounced as 'Orissa' and 'Odia' as 'Oriya' by the British. Some organisations propagating neo-revivalism in Orissa insist on writing these words in English as 'Odia' and 'Odissa' instead of 'Oriya' and 'Orissa'. But as till date official spelling (and pronunciation) in English remain 'Oriya' and 'Orissa', We have followed the present official practice here.
2. H. K. Mahatab, History of Orissa, P. - 6
3. There is now a trend in some parts of India to perform Odissi dance to the accompaniment of music other than Odissi music (such as Rabindra Sangeet, Ghazal etc.) But this practice, however innovative it may look is considered by most of the traditional grurus and famous Odissi dance schools as an incongruous hybridization. They consider this 'spurious mixture' as undesirable. This will be discussed in detail in the chapter entitled "Odissi music vis-a-vis Odissi dance."