



AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON GANDA BAJA: FOLK MUSIC OF WESTERN ODISHA

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Abstract:

The Ganda Baja is most prominent and unique folk music in western part of Odisha. The present paper focused on importance of Ganda Baja in socio-religious practices. This music exclusively plays by the Scheduled Caste (Harijan/ Ganda) community in western Odisha. It is believed that, no socio-religious rituals are complete without the Ganda Baja (traditional folk music). The Ganda Baja is traditionally plays during marriage ceremony, child birth celebration, idol immersion procession, some administrative occasion, funeral procession, etc or any fair and festival. Each occasion's music has distinct beat and tenor. The *dalkhai*, *rasarkeli*, *mailajada*, *chutkuchuta*, *rangabati*, etc are the most famous sambalpuri folk song closely associate with Ganda Baja. The group of youngster performs the dance with specific motion of hand and legs in the function and festival. While Rangabti song has received Padmashree award which was sang by Jitendra Haripal. Now days it is known as "*Dulduli*" due to slight modification and modernization and it is not confines in the western Odisha but also popular in worldwide. It is also known as sacred "Panchabadya" (composition of five instruments like *Dhol*, *Nissan*, *Tasa*, *Mahuri* and *Jhumka*) that carries with indigenous concept of *Sulo Bharni* (16 rhythms) which play vital role to communicate with the local Gramadevi (village Deities). Every Monday or Sankranti in every month, the Goddess appear in the body of her priest and trance medium, acting as sacred dance of different goddess to healing of patient (*kosti*). While not only provides a form of religious expression but also transmit to its listeners a strong emotional connection with local beliefs and identities.

Key Words: *Ganda Baja, folk, music, traditional, boil, Kosti*

Introduction:

The Ganda Baja traditional folk music of western Odisha is one of the few living musical tradition that endured over centuries in India. It encompasses within a wide range of folk music with varied form and sets a cultural boundary or a distinct ethnic of its own. It is widely practiced in socio-cultural setting in western Odisha and highly embodied with the rural common people. The Ganda Baja mostly plays by Scheduled Caste (Ganda/Harijan) indigenous community from eastern Indian state of Odisha. They mainly live in western Odisha and adjoining parts of Chhattisgarh, especially Bargarh, Balangir, Nuapada and Kalahandi Districts. Under the caste system prevalent all over India, they are considered as untouchable (Dalit). They are forced to stay in the bottom of the four fold caste system. The Ganda are divided into various endogamous division such as odia, laria, khadia, etc which are further divided into a number of congenital exogamous clans like bag, sika, nag, etc. They practice adult marriage and are mainly monogamous. Their traditional occupation are as weavers and village watchmen and they are also serve as village headmen as they are illiterate and marginalized from the mainstream of the society. Generally, they are landless people dependent upon the

agricultural laborer and play Ganda Baja for their livelihood.

Though their traditional occupation of weaving has been failing with mill made clothes, collectively they form groups with their musical instrument within their community to perform in different occasion. Five members is the minimum strength of the troop but it has the flexibility of extend the members. The members have been learning from their forefathers, having travelled together and performed with them since childhood. Due to social stigma associated with the community and practice of untouchability, the upper caste bar them from entering the temple as they treated as impure. They fill that their touch is defiling. It has been existed in rural pocket of villages and the hindu not putting anything in the hands of the Ganda while holding it himself but throw down despite their spiritual connection with Goddess.

Objective of the Study:

The present research has been conducted keeping in the mind of the following objectives:

- ❖ To identify the social status of Ganda Baja musician in the early stage
- ❖ To explore the traditional form of Ganda Baja and its importance in socio-religious practices.
- ❖ To examine the different form of rhythms, dances and songs have been associated with Gand Baja in the contemporary society.

Area of the Study:

The western part of Odisha is the hub of traditional sambalpuri music, dance and song. Most of the people those who are belong to Ganda community are residing in the districts like Bargarh, Balangir and Kalahandi. While, the troop of the Ganda Baja is exist in every villages in these districts. Keeping in this mind, the sample respondents for the present study have been purposively selected Banjipali village of Bargarh District.

Methodology:

The data and information for the present study have been collected from primary and secondary sources. Most of the data have been collected through primary sources as there is just a handful of literature available about Ganda Baja till date. The sample respondents included at the place of age old people who have experience about the Ganda Baja and other villagers who are the witnessed to such traditional practice. To make the research analytical, relevant data have been collected through Participatory Observation, Focus Group Discussion, Personal Interview and key informant interview method. Voices have been recorded from respondents (musician) to make the study more logical and comprehensive.

Result and Discussion:

The Ganda Baja has been a way of living and cultural manifestation of life in western Odisha. As the earlier days, the Ganda were patronized by the important Gauntia (the ruler) in the village and they were essential part of their festival. In the present study area it has found that, the Banjipali village was surrounded by the bamboo tree (local name Banji). So

the village called as Banjipali. The Gauntia system existed in the village before independence. The most powerful Gauntia Late Akura Barik was legal head of the village and he was the head of all revenue of neighborhood six villages. All the festivals like Nuakhai, Dussehra, Ratha yatra, etc celebrated in the village cumulatively by direction of Gauntia. While he had distributed the work to the villagers according to their professions such as mali (gardener), randhnia (cook), gualia (milk man), chaukidar (village watchman), Khusa para (hair dyer), Bajnia (the player of Ganda Baja) etc. Separate land had been allotted to them for their agricultural livelihood. The Ganda Baja played most important role in Dussehra, Nagbacha (celebrate just before one day of Nuakhai festival) and every Sankranti of the month.

Ganda Baja and social status:

The musician, who are necessity are male members those are who belongs to Ganda which are literally means the bad feeling. This indigenous term refers to the activity of tanning the leather from the instruments. As it known that, the five instrument of Ganda Baja (Dhol, Nissa, Tasa, Mahuri and Jhumka) mostly played by them which area divided into three categories such as membranophones, aerophone and idiophones. The membranophones are made from cowhide. Aerophones which produce sound only by using air they touch their saliva while producing the sound and the idiophones which resound in themselves. They are directly physical contact with cowhide and saliva. Thus in the Hindu perspective, Ganda musician are considered as extremely impure and untouchable. On the other hand, the musicians for the transcendent contact and communication with the local goddess. This paradox takes the shape of a ritual inversion and the socially marginalized become spiritually powerful by communicating with the sacred power of goddess. Due to uncontrolled divine powers feared by others.

Dhol:

The dhol is large long drum (93 cm to 1.5mtrs length) which made from the trunk of a tree and strung with cowhide (gai chmada) on both sides. Along the length of the dhol run strips of cowhide which is called badi and attached to both sides with the rings (kada). The player of the dhol is called dhulia. The right side of the dhulia is called tali that made with calf's skin which produce slow sound. The left side of dhol is called dhaya(pita). Tali (35 cm diameter) slightly smaller than the dhaya (38 cm diameter). The dhaya is the bitten with a stick (khada). The dhulia play main role to change the rhythms in the music.

Nissan:

The Nissan is the shape of half cut melon. It is made of wooden and iron sheets covers back. The player of the Nissan is called Nisania played with two rubber stick (chimtha). While it made with cowhide and goat skin. Often it covered with colorful paintings by putting the horn of deer in both side. It is always played with maximum strength and produces penetrating sound which is compared to the thunder storm and increase the heart beat.

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Tasa:

It is made of clay and covered with cowhide. It is played with two thin bamboo sticks and produces very thin sound.

Mahuri:

The Mahuri is long shape made with bamboo along with some hole by putting the small cowhide at the top and touch to the mouth blow to produce the sound. The mahuria play a crucial role to changing of character of music and rhythms.

Jhumka:

It is one type of bell that associates with goddess. It matches with rhythms and produce streaming sound.

Socio-religious practices associated with Ganda Baja:

The folk music is inseparable part of socio-religious life of western Odisha. Whether it marriage ceremony or birth celebration or any fair and festival, music is must. For any occasion there is music. While no ritual is complete without the music. Particular rituals have specific rhythms for each and every rite. Considering the importance of Ganda Baja there is a proverb in local dialect that, agho baja, pachhe raja. That means king next to music.

The Ganda Baja musicians of Banjipali village play a central role in the Nagbacha and boil rituals of village's goddess embodiment and ritual healing. The village deities appeared in the body of her priest (every Monday evening, every Sankranti of the month, day before Nuakhai festival and in Dussehra Puni) and boil comes upon the pujhari. The Ganda Baja music act in possession with specific rhythms the goddess manifests herself in the dance and speech of the priest. This tradition is an artistic healing performance that integrates dance, music and ritual speech in order to heal patients (kosti). During the time of chaturthi and dussehra puni in honour of goddess Samleswari, boil/ nagbacha rituals gain a special intensity. At this time, the spirit of goddess comes with a particular power and efficaciousness upon her priest who becomes her trance medium boil. The goddess spirit possession boil is musically symbolized by a specific sequence of rhythms, the sulo bharni (16 rhythms). These rhythms are name of the 16 different goddess and said to express their speeches and character. The musicians aurally recognize the identity of the specific goddess and rhythms. The dance of the trance medium boil signifies the appearance of the goddess. In the dance pattern of the boil rituals the traditional elements of dalkhai, the most popular folk style in western Odisha. The dalkhai dance traditionally associated with puberty rituals for unmarried girls preparing young women and girls for their social and biological maturity. During the time dance, the dancer sway their body, dangel their hands and steps their feet as per the rhythms of Ganda Baja. The dhulia (drummer) beats the dhol and leads the troupe with different rhythms. The women/young girls gracefully join their legs together and bent their knees to create steps of dalkhai dance. While the Ranagabati song sung by Padmashree Jitendra Haripal with the music composition of Ganda Baja.

Ganda Baja in contemporary society:

The Ganda Baja is witnessed to paradigm shift at every nook. As per the societal change and its impact on common life, gradually the music is changing its cultural context to current cultural demand. The traditional performance practices are unable to meet the current trend of cultural demand. On the other hand, the upcoming generation of traditional musician is moving towards the dulduli which is the contemporary form of Ganda Baja and some of them are leaving the profession to find other means of earning. While in the contemporary society, the digitized music and platform have vastly influenced Ganda Baja folk music to transition into a new form of Ganda Baja which is subsequently different from original form. This new form of music instruments uses more electronic instrument assimilated with traditional form of Ganda Baja. In many it found that, the melody has been performed with modern form dance and song.

Conclusion:

In the present study, it tried to find that the Ganda musician can be considered a crucial component of cultural identity in western Odisha. The marginalized status of the musicians directing the divine performance plays a substantial role in the inner logic of the ritual. The polyrhythmic music of the village musician is generally understood as untouchable. But the village goddess comes into the trance only with the rhythms of Ganda Baja. Now, the Ganda Baja converted to dulduli and performs in a large group in different occasion. It is not only confined in western Odisha but also many cultural academic centre teaching different forms of rhythms. In early days the Ganda Baja was playing in the demand of the village Gauntia by a specific community of people but now any others are attracting to this performance.

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