

By the time of Natyasastra was written, Odisha might have experienced two types of dance style, one 'Daibiki' [earmarked only for Debata or God], the other is 'Manusi' or of general mass. Bharat Muni, therefore has said in his theatrics in 26th stanza of 6' canto-

'Daibiki Manusi Chaiva Sidhisyed Dwibidheiba Cha'. In Abhinaya Chandrika it is mentioned in Udra country the performance of dance has always reached the zenith.

During passage of time the emperors of Odisha have made this dance as a part of rituals of Lord Jagannath. The Gotipua tradition, at least

none for Pancha Mahadev, though Lord Siva is the cosmic actor and dancer. He brought it to the notice of the then Maharaja and thus was born Gotipua tradition, a form that was performing before Lord Siva and Radha Krushna.

In Odia Bhagabata, Atibadi Jagannath Das has mentioned that Lord Jagannath is very much pleased if dance is performed and offered to him. The tradition of boys dressed as girl dancing on religious festivals goes back to the 16th century. Around that time the wave of Vakti cult, the path of devotion swept over Odisha, and Saints and seers, like Chaitanya influenced the masses as well as received Royal Support. Ramananda

Gotipua Dance : A Tradition of Odisha

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more than 500 years old, is known from historical records that the Udra dance was first introduced in the holy shrine of Lord Jagannath in the 5th century A.D. being patronised by the rulers. The three major festivals at which Gotipua dance performed are Chandan Jatra, Jhulan Jatra and Dola Jatra.

In the period of Pratap Rudra Deva [1497-1540], Baisnov Saint Chaitanya Mahaprabhu was arrived at Puri during the period of Chandan Jatra. He discovered that most traditional dance were an offering to Lord Jagannath or Lord Krushna, while there were

Roy, the minister of Gajapati was a follower of Chaitanya. It is believed that during their first meeting Chaitanya described to him 'Madhura Rasa Upasana', the mode of devotion to Lord Krishna through conjugal love, giving first place to the Shakhi Vaba. The cult of Sakhi Vaba propagated Bhakti by offering oneself as a Gopi to the Lord. Believers say that Krishna alone is the male and the devotees are all His consorts, even male followers consider themselves to be Krishna's female attendants [Sakhi Vaba].

The culture of dance and music in Akhada was a tradition in Odisha. In Sata Sahi Akhada of Puri, along with physical culture, Gotipua dance

and music was being taught by the eminent Gotipua Gurus. The boy dancer below 12 years only attached to the Akhada were known as Akhada Pila, these Akhada served as nurseries for a variety of cultural activities.

Girls were kept out of Gotipua dance because their bodies are impure for a few day in a month, obviously they can't step into the temple in such a stage. Boys in the age between six to twelve were picked up, they pressed into the service of the Lord. However, they were prohibited from dancing when they turned 12, for about three years because that is the time they attain puberty. The aim and objective of the dance is to render happiness to Lord Siva and Lord Jagannath.

The Mangalacharan or Istadeva Bandana and Moksha Nrutya of Gotipua is Bandha Nrutya, which part is completely dedicated to Lord Siva, the icon of world dance. These lines are in line with Vedic tradition. Gotipua dance is mainly a Lasya dance. Its musical tuning is controlled by less vibrating instruments like Pakhauja, Flute and Kartal or Gini. The musical composition used in dance are attributed by eminent Vaisnav Odia Poet like Gopal Krishna, Banamali, Kabi Surya Baladev Ratha, Upendra Bhanj, Dinakrushna and Kabi Jayadeb etc.

In the Abhinaya part of its performance the tragic element of 'Biraha' on the line of 'Sahajia Vaisnav Dharma' has been introduced during the reign of Pratap Rudra Dev is its Vaisnabite theme like 'Geeta Govinda'. Earlier Gotipua used to perform the whole night, in special festival occasion, patronized by traditional Zamindar and Matha established, celebrating the divine myth of Radha Krushna Love.

With the slow disintegration of Mahari dance [Daibiki dance] due to various reasons,

the class of these boy dancers carried out the tradition with subsequent introduction of 'Bandha' [symbolic representation of mythological tales through acrobatic posture], the present day, all legendary Odissi Guru and exponents were Gotipua dancers in the early days. Even though the dance has similarities with Mahari dance style. Nevertheless crucial difference exist in technique and style.

Bandha or Moksha Nrutya, the dance through acrobatic movements became an essential feature of Gotipua dance. This piece of acrobatic dance was fully discarded and it developed the feminine grace and charm. Like Mahari dance, Gotipua dance is associated with worship. The picture of the dance that emerges has the poetic charm and delicacy of Medieval Odisha painting and sculptures. The affinity between Gotipua and Odissi can be noticed in their basic stances, Chauka and Tribhanga.

Young boys of tender age, dress up as girl [in saree], sing devotional love songs of Radha Krushna and perform Gotipua dance. The present classical Odissi dance evolves from this centuries old traditional dance form. Most former Odissi Gurus in their adolescence performed as Gotipua. The Mahari Seba was in vogue till some decade ago. They used to dance at the appointed hours in side the temple in front of the idols. But the Gotipua perform both within the precincts of the temple and outside of it.

Udra dance is more unspoilt, more ancient, more primitive form. These qualities may be attributed to Gotipua dance also. This dance is acrobatic, faster and more straight forward dance concentrating on beautiful postures, charming gestures and sensuous bands rather than on a detailed hand finger explanation of the song text, as in Bharata Natya, though these also exist

in Gotipua. This Gotipua dance brought up and developed with so much royal care and nourishment could not prosper further in the absence of royal patronage after the independence of India. The great art, Gotipua dance would have been lost for ever had No.1 Guru Sri Maguni Das with the active support and advice of his spiritual Guru Sri Abhiram Paramahans, tried to keep this culture alive by organizing a Gotipua troupe named 'Dasabhuja Gotipua Odissi Nrutya Parishad' in the year 1941, before six years of the independence. He started his own Gurukul Gotipua dance institute.

This institution is situated at Heritage Raghurajpur Village in his residence as a residential school, where he was born on 5th August, 1921. The boys stay with Guru in his residence for atleast six years and complete the course of training. Legendary Guru Maguni Das was trained from eminent Gotipua exponent of that time Guru Balavadra Sahu of village Raghurajpur. Noted that Padmabibhusan Kelu Charan Mohapatra, Padmasri Maguni Das, Dr. Jagannath Mohapatra are few among his Gotipua boys. When Kelu Charan Mohapatra [junior fellow of Maguni Das] activated himself with the new classical Odissi dance, Guru Sri Das dedicated himself with Gotipua dance revival and promotion with preservation sake. Over the years it has painstakingly sophistication and acceptance.

In the present form the Gotipua dance has become more precise and systematic in its conception and adopted a repertoire for the modern stage worthiness. It is now performed as a group dance of six to ten boys, choreographed in the traditional style. Musical accompaniment is

provided with Mardala or Pakhauja, Gini, Harmonium and Flute.

Guru Sri Das trained more than 100 Gotipua dancers in his career, who have become Odissi Dancers. His residential Gurukul Ashram also provides the boys with formal schooling upto Class-X. The Parishad, literally on its own, by virtue of the dance performance by these boys everywhere and anywhere, has revived this traditional dance culture of Odisha and made it well known among the people of India and abroad. Guruji has also participated in the International Workshop with his twinkle troupe in Paris, France in the year 1993 and 2003 sponsored by S.J. Rajiv Sethi's organization, Sarathi and also participated in the Edinburg Mela, Scotland in July 2002, India Mela at Japan in 2004 and Humberg, German in 2009. For his noteworthy performances and contribution towards the Gotipua dance he was conferred the Tulsi Award from Madhya Pradesh Govt. and felicitated by Odisha Sangeet Natak Academy in the year 1991. Not only as a Gotipua dancer, his rhythmic flow on Pakhauj had spellbound the audience last of his breath. He was conferred the Padmasri Award from Govt. of India in 2004.

While busy to promote Gotipua dance he suddenly fell ill and succumbed to his ailments on 4th December, 2008. He will be always remembered for his Noble Contribution to the traditional Gotipua Dance style of India.

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