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Evolution And Innovation: A Study Of Odissi Music Post-Independence

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Abstract

This research article explores the development of Odissi music in India after independence, examining its evolution, preservation efforts, modern influences, and socio-cultural impact. Through a historical lens, it analyzes the transition of Odissi music amidst political and social changes, highlighting traditional elements and contemporary innovations. Case studies illustrate key figures and events shaping Odissi music post-independence. The study also addresses challenges faced by the art form and proposes strategies for its preservation and promotion. Ultimately, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of Odissi music's significance in Indian culture and its trajectory in the modern era.

Keywords

Odissi music, Post –independence, Evolution, Preservation ,Innovation Socio- cultural impact, Traditional elements, Modern influences, Cultural heritage, Indian music.

Introduction

Odissi music, a classical music genre in India, has its roots in the eastern state of Odisha. With a history of over two thousand years, this traditional ritual music is dedicated to the service of Lord Jagannatha. It is characterized by authentic sangita-shastras, unique Ragas & Talas, and a distinctive style of rendition. The diverse elements of Odissi music encompass Odissi prabandha, Chaupadi, Chhanda, Champu, chautisā, janāna, Mālasri, Bhajana, Sarimāna, Jhulā, Kuduka, Koili, Poi, Boli, and more. The presentation dynamics are broadly categorized into raganga, bhabanga, natyanga, and dhrubapadanga. Notable composer-poets in the Odissi tradition include Jayadeva from the 12th century, Balarama Dasa, Atibadi Jagannatha Dasa, Dinakrusna Dasa, Kabi Samrata Upendra Bhanja, Banamali Dasa, Kabisurjya Baladeba Ratha, Abhimanyu Samanta Singhara, and Kabikalahansa Gopalakrusna Pattanayaka. According to Bharata Muni's Natya Shastra, Indian classical music is divided into four significant branches: Avanti, Panchali, Odramagadhi, and Dakshinatya.

Brief history of odissi music pre -independence

The rich and illustrious history of Odissi music can be traced back to ancient times, where its roots are deeply intertwined with the traditions and practices of Indian music. Prior to India's independence in 1947, Odissi music underwent significant evolution, shaped by a diverse range of cultural, social, and political influences. This comprehensive exploration, delves into the development of Odissi music before independence, shedding light on its defining features, notable personalities, and significant milestones.

Odissi music, also referred to as Odhrmagadhi music, finds its origins in the ancient region of Odra Magadha, which encompasses present-day Odisha and certain parts of neighboring states. Its historical roots can be traced back to the 2nd century BCE, as it is mentioned in the Natya Shastra, an ancient treatise on Indian performing arts. Within this text, Odhrmagadhi is described as one of the three primary styles of Indian music, alongside Gandhari (north Indian) and Dakshinatya (south Indian).

Throughout the course of its development, Odissi music assimilated influences from various musical traditions, including Hindustani, Carnatic, and folk music. These diverse influences have contributed to the distinct characteristics of this art form, such as its devotional themes, emphasis on melody, and intricate rhythm structures.

The devadasi tradition played a crucial role in the growth and transmission of Odissi music. Devadasis were women who dedicated themselves to serving deities and temples, performing sacred dances, music, and rituals. They were highly esteemed and possessed extensive knowledge of both the theoretical and practical aspects of Odissi music, including its melodic scales (ragas), rhythmic cycles (talas), and compositions (prabandhas).

During the 15th century, the rise of regional kingdoms, such as the Gajapati dynasty, greatly supported and patronized Odissi music and dance. Renowned composers like Jayadeva (the author of the Gita Govinda, a devotional poem from the 12th century), Upendra Bhanja (a poet from the 17th century), and Kabisurya Baladev Rath (a poet from the 19th century) created exceptional Odissi music pieces that continue to be cherished to this day.

Vaishnavism, a branch of Hinduism centered around the worship of Lord Vishnu and his avatars, played a significant role in shaping the themes and stylistic development of Odissi music. The Gita Govinda, which narrates the story of Lord Krishna (an avatar of Vishnu) and his beloved Radha, became a vital source of inspiration for Odissi music composers, who crafted numerous The evolution of Odissi music was shaped by various musical forms, including chhanda, champu, and bhajan. Composers crafted intricate compositions using ragas like Kalyana, Bhairavi, and Todi, along with complex talas and lyrical themes inspired by mythology, nature, and spirituality.

Odissi music has always been closely intertwined with Odissi dance, with each influencing the development of the other. The graceful movements, expressive gestures, and nuanced storytelling of Odissi dance provided a visual counterpart to the melodic and rhythmic intricacies of Odissi music.

During the British colonial period, Odissi music faced a decline due to changes in patronage and shifting social attitudes towards traditional arts. The abolition of the devadasi system in the early 20th century further contributed to this decline.

However, the post-independence era saw a renewed interest in Odissi music, with scholars, artists, and institutions working diligently to preserve and promote the art form. Figures like Singhari Shyamasundar Kar, Balakrushna Dash, and Ratikant Mohapatra played crucial roles in this revival, ensuring the survival and growth of Odissi music in the modern age. compositions based on the poem's lyrical verses.

Importance of studying the development of odissi music

It is imperative to explore the progress of Odissi music after India gained independence in order to comprehend its ability to withstand challenges, adapt to changing times, and make valuable contributions to the country's vibrant artistic heritage. By studying the endeavors of cultural institutions in reviving this art form, the fusion of traditional elements with Odia cinema, and the influence of digital platforms, we can truly grasp the lasting significance and worldwide allure of Odissi music. This analysis also emphasizes the need to strike a balance between preserving tradition and embracing innovation, ensuring the continuous growth and recognition of this art form, thus reaffirming its pivotal role in India's diverse classical music traditions.

Background of odissi music during the independence movement

During the Indian struggle for independence, Odissi music played a crucial role in fostering a sense of cultural identity and nationalistic fervor among the people of Odisha. As a classical art form deeply rooted in the region's history and spirituality, Odissi music became an integral part of the cultural renaissance that swept across India during this period.

Throughout this time, Odissi music served as a powerful medium for artistic expression, captivating the masses with its enchanting melodies and devotional themes. Artists and performers utilized this art form to convey the values of unity, resistance, and resilience, instilling a sense of pride and solidarity among the Odias.

Furthermore, the establishment of cultural institutions and organizations during the independence movement played a significant role in preserving and promoting Odissi music. These entities not only provided platforms for the dissemination of this art form but also facilitated collaborations among artists, scholars, and enthusiasts dedicated to safeguarding the rich heritage of Odissi music.

Following India's independence in 1947, Odissi music continued to evolve and adapt, reflecting the spirit of a newly sovereign nation. The post-independence era witnessed renewed efforts to elevate the status of Odissi music on national and international platforms, ensuring its enduring legacy as a cherished classical tradition within India's vibrant artistic landscape.

Impact of political and social changes on odissi music post-independence

The evolution of Odissi music following India's independence has been influenced by a variety of political and social factors, showcasing the art form's ability to adapt and thrive. Since the establishment of the Indian republic in 1947, Odissi music has encountered new opportunities and challenges that have contributed to its modern identity.

Government support and cultural institutions have been instrumental in promoting and safeguarding Odissi music by providing financial backing, research opportunities, and platforms for performances and collaborations. These initiatives have sparked a renewed interest in traditional art forms, prompting artists to explore innovative ways of expression while preserving the classical roots of Odissi music.

Social changes, including urbanization, globalization, and technological advancements, have presented Odissi music with a mix of obstacles and possibilities. While urbanization and globalization have exposed audiences to a variety of musical influences, they have also required a reevaluation of Odissi music's relevance and appeal. In response, artists have worked to blend traditional elements with contemporary styles, ensuring that the art form remains relevant to changing societal preferences.

The rise of digital platforms and media outreach has further revolutionized the dissemination and engagement of Odissi music, allowing for global access, participation, and cultural exchange. Consequently, Odissi music has garnered international acclaim, with artists and enthusiasts transcending borders to celebrate its rich heritage and artistic significance.

In conclusion, the political and social changes post-independence have significantly shaped the contemporary landscape of Odissi music. The art form's ability to adapt and evolve while preserving its classical essence underscores its enduring beauty and resilience, solidifying its position within India's diverse and dynamic artistic traditions.

Examination of traditional elements of Odissi Music and their preservation post-independence

The conservation of traditional elements of Odissi music following independence has been a key focus for artists, scholars, and cultural organizations committed to upholding the classical heritage of the art form. This endeavor has entailed a thorough examination of various components, including ragas, talas, compositions, and the utilization of traditional musical instruments.

Ragas, the melodic scales that underpin Odissi music, have been meticulously recorded and passed down through teaching to ensure their continuity across generations. Similarly, talas, or rhythmic patterns, have been safeguarded through consistent practice and educational efforts. Time-honored compositions, such as those from Jayadeva's 'Gita Govinda,' remain significant in the Odissi repertoire, acting as a link between the past and present.

Traditional instruments like the pakhwaj, mardal, harmonium, flute, and sitar have also played a crucial role in preserving Odissi music. Initiatives have been undertaken to encourage the use of these instruments through workshops, performances, and educational programs, highlighting their distinct contributions to the sonic landscape of the art form.

Furthermore, institutions like the Odisha Sangeet Natak Akademi have been instrumental in promoting research, collaboration, and the sharing of knowledge concerning the traditional aspects of Odissi music. The incorporation of these elements into contemporary styles in Odia cinema has further aided in their preservation and popularization.

Efforts by scholars, musician and cultural institutions to safeguard traditional odissi music

The preservation of traditional Odissi music has been a collaborative endeavor undertaken by scholars, musicians, and cultural institutions, each contributing their expertise and resources to safeguard and promote the classical heritage of this art form.

Scholars have played a pivotal role in extensively researching the history, theory, and practice of Odissi music. Their findings have been documented in books, articles, and dissertations, enriching our understanding of the various elements of Odissi music and highlighting its cultural significance within India's diverse artistic landscape.

Musicians have been at the forefront of preserving traditional Odissi music through their performances, compositions, and teaching efforts. By adhering to classical principles while exploring innovative avenues of expression, they have ensured that the art form remains dynamic and relevant. Renowned musicians like Singhari Shyamasundar Kar and Sanjukta Panigrahi have made significant contributions to the evolution and recognition of Odissi music on both national and international platforms.

Cultural institutions, such as the Odisha Sangeet Natak Akademi, Utkal Sangeet Samaj, and various music and dance schools, have provided crucial support and resources for the preservation and dissemination of Odissi music. Through the organization of concerts, workshops, and seminars, these institutions have created opportunities for artists and scholars to collaborate and exchange knowledge. They have also implemented educational initiatives to promote the art form among younger generations, ensuring its continuous transmission and growth.

Exploration of modern influences on odissi music

The examination of contemporary influences on Odissi music uncovers a captivating interaction between tradition and innovation. Despite its deep roots in ancient heritage, Odissi music has elegantly adjusted to modern trends, embracing new genres, technologies, and cultural exchanges.

One notable impact is the fusion of Odissi music with other genres like jazz, rock, and electronic music, resulting in engaging fusion styles. This integration has allowed Odissi music to reach wider audiences and showcase its versatility in the global music scene. Renowned artists such as Trilok Gurtu, Anoushka Shankar, and Susmit Sen have effectively combined Odissi elements with diverse musical traditions, emphasizing the adaptability of this art form.

The rise of digital platforms and technological advancements has further revolutionized the dissemination and engagement of Odissi music. Online educational resources, music streaming services, and social media have enhanced the accessibility of Odissi music, promoting appreciation and collaboration among artists and fans worldwide. This digital presence has played a crucial role in the continuous evolution and resilience of Odissi music.

Moreover, the film industry has played a part in maintaining the contemporary relevance of Odissi music. Odia cinema has incorporated traditional Odissi music into its soundtracks, blending classical elements with modern compositions. This fusion not only honors Odisha's cultural legacy but also demonstrates Odissi music's capacity to adapt and contribute to new artistic forms.

Analysis of innovation in musical composition, instrumentation, and performance techniques

The examination of innovation in Odissi music composition, instrumentation, and performance techniques showcases the adaptability and resilience of this art form in the face of cultural, social, and technological changes.

Regarding composition, modern Odissi music often combines traditional aspects with contemporary influences, leading to inventive and captivating compositions. Composers have adeptly integrated elements from various genres, including jazz, rock, and electronic music, expanding the sonic range of Odissi music while preserving its fundamental identity. This fusion approach has not only enriched the repertoire of this art form but also contributed to its global appeal.

In terms of instrumentation, Odissi music has evolved to incorporate both traditional and modern instruments. While instruments like the pakhwaj, mardal, harmonium, flute, and sitar continue to play a vital

role in the sonic landscape of Odissi music, artists have also experimented with the inclusion of instruments such as the guitar, drums, and synthesizers. This integration of contemporary instruments has allowed for unique combinations of sounds and timbres, enhancing the expressive potential of Odissi music.

Furthermore, performance techniques in Odissi music have witnessed significant innovation. Traditionally, Odissi performances emphasize the guru-shishya (teacher-student) relationship, focusing on devotional themes and classical repertoire. However, contemporary artists have introduced new performance styles, incorporating storytelling, multimedia elements, and collaborative performances with artists from different musical traditions. As a result, these engaging and dynamic performances captivate diverse audiences while preserving the inherent charm and depth of Odissi music.

The development of Odissi music has deeply impacted the socio-cultural fabric of Odia society, playing a significant role in shaping the region's artistic heritage.

Examination of the socio cultural impact of odissi music evolution

The development of Odissi music has deeply impacted the socio-cultural fabric of Odia society, playing a significant role in shaping the region's artistic heritage. Through an exploration of this influence, we can gain a deeper understanding of the importance of this art form and its contribution to cultural identity.

The evolution of Odissi music has played a crucial role in fostering a sense of cultural pride and unity among the people of Odisha. This art form is intricately connected to the region's history, spirituality, and traditions, resonating with audiences through its devotional themes and enchanting melodies. By promoting shared values and a common cultural heritage, Odissi music has become a symbol of cultural identity in Odisha.

Odissi music has not only served as a form of artistic expression but also as a platform for social commentary and dialogue. Through this art form, artists can address various societal issues, sharing their experiences, perspectives, and aspirations with audiences. This has led to increased empathy and understanding among listeners, fostering a sense of community and connection within Odia society.

Case studies highlighting key figures composition, or events that have shaped odissi music post-independence

Numerous influential figures, compositions, and events have played a crucial role in shaping Odissi music post-independence, leading to its development and recognition as a classical Indian music genre.

Singhari Shyamasundar Kar:

A respected Odissi music teacher and composer, Kar devoted his life to instructing, performing, and promoting Odissi music. His works, such as "Pashyati Dishu Dishu" and "Priya Charu Shile," showcase the traditional aspects and poetic elegance of the art form.

The establishment of Odisha Sangeet Natak Akademi:

Odisha Sangeet Natak Akademi was established in 1954, this cultural organization has been instrumental in advocating for and safeguarding Odissi music. Through research projects, performance opportunities, and educational initiatives, the Akademi has nurtured the advancement and preservation of Odissi music post-independence.

Kelucharan Mohapatra:

An iconic Odissi dancer and teacher, Mohapatra's impact on Odissi dance has indirectly influenced the evolution of Odissi music. By incorporating traditional music compositions and rhythmic structures into his choreography, Mohapatra helped raise the profile of Odissi music on both national and international platforms.

The incorporation of Odissi music in Odia cinema:

The inclusion of Odissi music elements in Odia film soundtracks has significantly increased the popularity of the art form among wider audiences. Composers like Akshaya Mohanty and Prafulla Kar have adeptly blended classical Odissi ragas and talas with modern compositions, fostering a deeper appreciation for this traditional art form.

Discussion of challenges faced by odissi music in the modern era

Odissi music, like many other traditional art forms, has encountered numerous obstacles in the modern era. Some of these hurdles include:

- 1. Decrease in patronage:** As societal and political landscapes evolve and modern entertainment takes center stage, Odissi music has witnessed a decline in traditional support from royal courts and temples. Consequently, artists face reduced financial backing and limited performance opportunities.
- 2. Erosion of traditional knowledge:** The decline of the devadasi system and the marginalization of traditional artist communities have resulted in the loss of invaluable knowledge and skills associated with Odissi music.
- 3. Insufficient documentation:** Inadequate documentation of Odissi music's history, theory, and compositions has impeded its preservation and dissemination. This poses a challenge for scholars and enthusiasts seeking comprehensive resources on the art form.
- 4. Competition from popular culture:** The widespread popularity of Bollywood music, pop music, and other commercial genres has presented a challenge for Odissi music in attracting younger audiences and maintaining its relevance in the mainstream.
- 5. Globalization and cultural exchange:** While exposure to diverse musical traditions has enriched Odissi music, it has also raised questions about the authenticity and identity of this art form in an increasingly globalized world.

Proposed strategies for the preservation and promotion of odissi music in the future

Ensuring the preservation and promotion of Odissi music for future generations is a shared responsibility. There are various approaches that can be taken to achieve this goal:

- 1. Strengthening institutional support:** It is crucial to enhance the capabilities of cultural institutions like the Odisha Sangeet Natak Akademi. This can be done by providing financial assistance, research opportunities, and performance platforms for both Odissi music artists and scholars.
- 2. Documentation and digitization:** A comprehensive documentation of Odissi music's history, theory, and compositions should be encouraged through research initiatives, audio-visual archives, and digital platforms. This will make these valuable resources accessible to a wider audience.

- 3. Education and training:** Integrating Odissi music into school and university curricula is essential. Additionally, offering scholarships and apprenticeships to aspiring artists and supporting the establishment of music schools and workshops focused on Odissi music will help nurture talent.
- 4. Collaborations and cultural exchanges:** Facilitating partnerships between Odissi musicians and artists from other genres and traditions can encourage creative dialogues, experimentation, and the production of innovative works.
- 5. Community engagement and public awareness:** Organizing concerts, festivals, and seminars dedicated to promoting Odissi music among diverse audiences is crucial. These events should emphasize the cultural significance and artistic richness of Odissi music.
- 6. Leveraging media and technology:** Utilizing digital platforms, social media, and online resources can effectively disseminate Odissi music, promote artists, and foster global appreciation for this art form.
- 7. Encouraging intergenerational transmission:** Supporting initiatives that facilitate the transfer of knowledge and skills from senior Odissi musicians to younger generations is vital. This ensures the continuity and evolution of the Odissi music tradition.

Implications of the study for the future of odissi music

The examination of the evolution and challenges of Odissi music offers valuable insights into the future direction of this art form, underscoring the importance of adaptability, innovation, and preservation. The main implications of this study are as follows:

- 1. Advocating for a balanced approach:** The future of Odissi music lies in finding a harmonious balance between preserving its traditional elements and embracing modern influences. This approach will ensure the resilience and relevance of the art form in an ever-changing world.
- 2. Highlighting the significance of institutional support:** Cultural institutions and government bodies play a crucial role in safeguarding Odissi music through financial support, research initiatives, and providing platforms for performances. Strengthening institutional support is vital for the survival and growth of this art form.
- 3. Encouraging education and transmission:** The study emphasizes the importance of educating younger generations about the rich heritage of Odissi music and ensuring the transfer of knowledge and skills from experienced artists to aspiring musicians. This will contribute to the continued growth and recognition of the art form.
- 4. Embracing technology and digital platforms:** Utilizing digital resources and platforms is essential for the dissemination of Odissi music, promoting artists, and fostering global appreciation for this art form. Technology can also facilitate documentation, research, and collaborations, enriching the creative landscape of Odissi music.
- 5. Promoting interdisciplinary collaborations:** The future of Odissi music may involve increased collaborations with other art forms, genres, and traditions. Such partnerships can lead to innovative works and contribute to the dynamic evolution of this art form.
- 6. Enhancing community engagement:** Involving local communities in the preservation and promotion of Odissi music ensures its continued resonance and appreciation within its cultural context. By actively engaging the community, the art form can thrive and maintain its cultural significance.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the trajectory of Odissi music after gaining independence has witnessed a remarkable renaissance, transforming it from a regional art form to a globally recognized classical music tradition. This evolution stands as a testament to the collective efforts and vision of numerous artists, scholars, institutions, and government bodies dedicated to the preservation, promotion, and development of Odissi music.

During the post-independence period, Odissi music underwent formal codification and standardization, led by esteemed gurus and scholars. This process involved the systematic classification of its distinct ragas, talas, and compositional forms, forming the foundation for its dissemination through formal education and training. Educational institutions, music academies, and cultural organizations emerged as key players in nurturing young talent and ensuring the transmission of this classical art form to future generations.

As Odissi music continued to evolve, its integration into various performance mediums further enriched and expanded its artistic scope. Collaborations with dance and theater productions, as well as experimental fusion projects, contributed to the innovation and dynamism of Odissi music. These creative intersections not only enhanced its aesthetic appeal but also broadened its audience base, transcending cultural and geographical boundaries.

The advent of modern technology has played a significant role in the growth and accessibility of Odissi music. Digital platforms have facilitated the global dissemination of Odissi music, while international collaborations have fostered cross-cultural dialogue and exchange. These developments have been instrumental in raising awareness and appreciation for Odissi music, elevating its stature among the world's classical music traditions.

However, the continued development and preservation of Odissi music necessitate sustained commitment and investment from all stakeholders. This includes providing financial support for artists, scholars, and institutions involved in its promotion and preservation.

Support is provided for artists, scholars, and institutions in the field, along with the promotion of research and documentation initiatives. Nurturing young talent through scholarships, fellowships, and performance opportunities will guarantee the continuous growth, adaptation, and evolution of Odissi music amidst new challenges and changing artistic environments. The journey of Odissi music post-independence serves as a testament to the strength of collective passion, vision, and perseverance. Moving forward, it is essential to capitalize on past achievements, embracing new avenues for development while preserving the distinct identity of Odissi music. By investing in its future and cultivating a dynamic environment for artistic exchange and innovation, we can ensure that this classical tradition remains a source of inspiration and enrichment for future generations.

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