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## *Chautishā*: A Unique Aspect of Odissi Classical Music

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### Abstract

Indian Art music is a great treasure of art, music, Dance and literature. One of the glorious ancient forms of music in Odisha is *Odissi Shāstriya Sangeet* (Odissi Classical Music). With codified grammar and well-established syntactic structure, Odissi music has a deep-rooted tradition and its exuberance lies in its application. That is why Odissi music is considered to be an amalgamation of literature, grammar and music and also this is what makes it stand apart as a different and independent form of music. The different lyrical compositions or *Prabandhas* used in Odissi classical music is as - *Odissi, Champu, Chhānda, Chautishā, Pallavi, Bhajan, Janāna, Gita Govinda* etc. Despite the fact that many such narrations are available in Odissi music the Chautishā has carved an independent place for itself. The present study includes a detailed investigation on the uniqueness of Chautishā in Odissi Classical Music.

**Index terms:** Odissi classical music, Odissi, Chanda, Champu, Chautisha, Gita Gobinda, Pallavai, Bhajan, Janana.

### Introduction

The term “*Chautishā*”, a co-local term in Odia language derived from the word “*Chautirishā*” and the Sanskrit word “*Chatuhtrinshakhyari*” means a form of songs which has 34 stanzas. Commonly it is accepted that all the 34 stanzas the *Chautishā* has a chronological arrangement of an alphabetical order from “*ka*” to “*kshya*”. It means all the stanzas are started in this alphabetical order. Several well-known epics have faded into oblivion but “*Chautishā*” still enjoys a privileged place in music of Odisha. Since more than thousand years *Chautishā* just like folk tales have established itself firmly on the land of Odisha. From villages to towns, from temples to king’s courts, from queen’s palace to the *Mathas* of Acharyas, from *Aashrams* of yogis to martial songs, from the melancholic verses of *Kali Mati* to the discussion and criticism of *Bhāgavat* in village hamlets, *Chautishā* occupies a special place in Odisha’s musical tradition (Padhi, 2004)

It may be mentioned here that this type of composition is called “*Mātrukaa prabandha*” in ancient musical texts. The shloka says -

एकैक - मातृकावर्ण पूर्वकनि पदानि चेत I  
क्रमेण यत्र गीयन्ते मातृका, सा त्रिधा मता I

“*Mātrūkā*” means “*Mulam*” the original alphabet in which all the beginning words of each stanza with this “*Mulam*” or “*Mātrūkā*” Varna chronologically one after another are set “*Mātrūkā Prabandha*” is divided in to three words (Das, 2004):

- (i) *Divyā*: (दिव्या संस्कृतया वाचा) The word in Sanskrit language
- (ii) *Mānushee*: (मानुषी प्राकृत गिरा) The word in regional language
- (iii) *Divyā Mānushee*: (द्वयोर्मिश्रयणाद्वक्ता मातृका दिव्यामनुषि) The language both in Sanskrit and *Prakrta* or regional language.

The *Choutishā* in Odissi Music System have been composed in Odia language and according to the Sanskrit shloka mentioned above the *Chautishā* is “*Mānushee Mātrūkā Prabandha*” type.

Since these *Chautishā*'s are of 34 long composition it is again classified as the “*Pāñchālī Prabandha*” *Sangeeta Shāstra* says: “*Pāñchālī Bahubih Pādaih*” (पाँचाली बहुभिः पादै) means the *Pāñchālī Prabandhas* are of several stanzas. Though *Chautishā* is limited in to 34 stanzas which is quite different from the lyrical form of songs which has maximum of 4 to 8 stanzas. So, they are called *Chatuhsparī*, *Astapadi* etc. Since *Chautishā* is a very long form of song has as many as 34 stanzas, therefore according to the ancient text of music *Chautishā* is categorised as the “*Mānushee Mātrūkā Pāñchālī Prabandha*”

### ***Dwādashākhyari* (द्वादशाक्षरि) *Unapanchāshakhyari* (उनपंचसाक्षर)**

Like *Chautishā* there are also “*Mānushee Mātrūkā Pāñhālī Prabandha*” which are sung in *Chautishā* style. The *Dwādashākhyari* means a song of 12 stanzas starting from vowel alphabet from “*A*” (अ) to “*Aou*” (औ). So also, a song starting from “*A*” (अ) to “*Kshya*” (क्ष्य). The all 49 alphabets are called “*Unapanchāshakhyari*” *Chautishā* or “*A - Kshya mayee*” (अ - क्ष्य मयी) *Chautishā* (Das, 1980a).

There are some *Chautishā* songs in which the 34 stanzas are composed in an opposite order of the alphabets that is from “*Khya*” (क्ष्य) to “*Ka*” (क), that means the first stanza is composed with the beginning of last alphabet “*Khya*” (क्ष्य) and goes on a serial order is called *Olatā or Biaparitā Chautishā* (Das, 1980a).

## **2. Classification of *Chautishā* and their uniqueness**

Almost all *Chautishā*'s are set to different *brutta* or *bāni* like *Kalasā*, *Chokhi*, *Ashādhasukla*, *Chakrakeli*, *Pancham Barādi*, *Mangal* etc and set to *taal* like *Khematā*, *Rupak*, *Ekatāli*, *Aadatāli*, *Jati* etc. According to the theme and purpose, the *Chautishā*'s are classified in several parts such as (Das, 1980a):

- 2.1 . (बैराग्य चरुतिशा) *Bairāgya Chautishā*
- 2.2. (जणाण चरुतिशा) *Janāna Chautishā*
- 2.3. (तत्वात्मक चरुतिशा) *Tatwātmak Chautishā*
- 2.4. (कथा चरुतिशा) *Kathā Chautishā*
- 2.5. (चिटाऊ चरुतिशा) *Chitāu Chautishā*
- 2.6. (खेदात्मक चरुतिशा) *Khedātmaka Chautishā*
- 2.7. (अलंकार चरुतिशा) *Alankār Chautishā*

### **2.1. (बैराग्य चरुतिशा) *Bairāgā Chautishā***

The austere and devotional *Chautishā* is very popular in the houses of Odisha. All of these songs are sung in an oral tradition. Just as the philosophical and emotional, the devotional and educational as well. Time has not tarnished it. They are eternal, just as they are universal.

“*Manabodh Chautishā*” by Bhaktacharan Das has left the whole of Odisha in a state of indifference, in the midst of worldly vanity, the rush of wealth and youth, the inevitability of death, it gives rise to a sense of true value.

## 2.2. (जणाण चऊतिशा) *Janāna Chautishā*

There are nine ways of devotion and *that's are Shrabana, Kirtana, Smarana, Archhanā, Vandanā, Sākhya, Dāsya, Pādasevana and Aātmnivedana*. There is a rich tradition of devotional music in our culture and that holy tradition is still continuing. Also there are some classifications of devotional music in Odia culture E.g. *Bhajana, Janāna, Kirtana, Vandanā, Māalashree, Prārthanā, Saguna, Nirguna, Manashikhyā, Sharirbheda* etc. Out of these "*Janāna*" is the own creation of our ancient poets. It is often dedicated to the service of *Lord Jagannath*. Usually, a person expresses his or her grief, pain and poverty to God through *Janāna*. *Janāna* binds devotees and God in the path of devotion. The tradition of singing *janāna* in Odissi Music is very ancient. "*Aartatrana chautishaa*" which is written by "*Kabi Dinakrushna*" is the most popular and Its place is high among the "*Janāna chautishaa*" due to its spontaneous emotion and the smooth language. Each of its letters is like stream of tears and Ocean of Mercy. It puts as much emphasis on language and emotion as on Philosophy. *Kabi Dinakrushna* is one of the famous poets of Odia literature. Here in this *Aartatrāna Chautishā* Kabi mentioned that I am unemployed I bow with complete surrender (करमहीन जन.....काकुस्तभर होई कर जोड़ी जनाई). "O sea of grace why not have mercy for me? (कृपा सरित पति होई.....करुणा कल नहीं किपा हे भाबग्रहि ).Here the most priority is given to the dévotion and the depth of devotion has been revealed. Here I am going to mention two stanzas' of "*Aartatrāna*" or "*Janāna*" (Das ,1980b)

## 2.3. (तत्वात्मक चऊतिशा) *Tatwātmak Chautishā*

It depicts the knowledge of body elements and the element of soul.

"*Tatwātmak Chautishā*" the name itself shows that its depth and gravity. The Body (पिंड) is an universe and from *Mulādhār Chakra* ( मूलाधार चक्र ) to *Sahasra kamal* ( सहस्रा कमल ) that universe is spread and the symbolic word's of that universe is like : *Chhatishaa patanaa, Trivenee, Trikuta, Golaahata, Bankunaala, Abana, Kaaunrimandal, Dhruvamandal, Nirbikalpa, Manibedi, Olata Kadamba, Kamath Dugdha, Ujaani Kamal, Anaahat Dhvani, Domuhaan Sarpa, Urmadhurma Jyotijwala, Sanjivaneepur, Kalindi Ujaani Bahiba, Phukuni Bandha, Golaka, Bishama Krota, Olata Padma, Raahas Nityasthali, Sahasra Kamala* etc.

"*Jogindra Gitikā*" one most popular "*Tatwātmak Chautishā*" among all other *Chautishā*. In the rural areas of Odisha, Yogis are begging and educating the society through "*Tatwātmak Chautishā*" by playing *Ektārā* (One string Instrument) and singing these long stanzas and such singing has a positive effect on society.

## 2.4. (कथा चऊतिशा) *Kathā Chautishā*

This *Chautishā* is based on all the myths and the story of a particular situation like - *Mathuraabijaya, Dhanubhanga, Raghubeera, Māyāmuga, Shreekrushna Vidyā Shikhya, Sitā Kārunya, Rāma kārunya* etc *Mathurābijaya*: The story of "*Krishna*" and "*Balaram*" and both are going to *Mathurā* leaving from *Gopapura* while all the people of *Gopapura* are feeling a mountain of sorrow's and remembering all the joyful past. It narrated in very beautiful manner in "*Kala Kalebar Chautishā*". *Kathā Chautishā* always teaches us the value of life as well as discipline of leaving in society . *Kathā Chautishā* is easily accessible to people from all categories of life due to a story based myth and understandable language for all ages. A picture is drawn in the mind and both inspiration and devotion are awakened when we heard it. In rural areas of Odisha, people used to sing it to make their working life easier and simple. Even today, people are giving impotence to listen *Kathā Chautishā*

## 2.5. (चिटाऊ चऊतिशा ) *Chitāu Chautishā*

"*Chitāu*" (चिटाऊ) meaning is to send a message through the messenger - *Duta* (दूत) male messenger or *Dutee* (दुती) female messenger. "*Meghaduta Kāvya*" is accepted as the main source of this kind of poetries. "*Chitāu*" (चिटाऊ) makes the relationship stronger and longer between *Nayak* (Hero) and *Nayika* (Heroine). "*Chitāu*" (चिटाऊ) is not like simple letter of love and affection but creates depth of feelings and bondage the root of lovely emotion. The *Duta* (दूत) or *Dutee* (दुती) may be a person, Cloud or Bird like- *Megha Duta, Jaladhar, Maruta, Chitāu, Kokila, Hansa, Kalakantha, Baula, Gopi, Pikabara and Madhupa* in the thoughts of the poet . It takes a unique place among the *Odia Choutisha* literature because of most of the *Chitāu Chautishā* based on *Sringār Rasa* and many poets like *Dhananjya Bhanj, Kabi Samrat Upendra Bhanja, Deenakrushna, Purushottam Das, Bishnu Das* has given Identity of achievement by doing great work on *Chitāu Chautishā*.

## 2.6. (खेदात्मक चउतिशा ) *Khedātmaka Chautishā*

The main features of this type of *Chautishā* is *Kheda*, *Kshyobh* or *Dukha*, *Pranayasmruti* and *Birahadasha* etc. Though the emotion and the expression of this *Chautishā* is sorrow and disappoint but the reflection of each word is having full of love and affection. In most cases *Khedatmaka Chautishā* reveals waiting for the reunion and presented every lovely moment of the past .It carries two main characters one is *Nayak* and other one is *Naika* and a third character is needed to express grief that may be *Baula*, *Ghanamalaa*, *Nabaghana*, *uddhaba*, *Bandhabi*, *Radhamadhaba* etc. It is not only limited to *Sringaar Rasa* but also, we found *Batsalya Mamata* and *Bhakti Rasa* among *Khedatmaka Chautishā*'s.

### Exaple -2.6.1 (बर्षा भाबना चउतिशा) *Barshā Bhābanā Chautishā* by Poet Bishnu Das

The story of this *Chautishā* is the protagonist's (नायक) feelings for the Heroine (नाइका) looking at the new clouds ( नबघन ) in the month of July ( आशाढ मास ) and writing the letter of love and affection ( नीलकंठ चिंता करी नगरिकी लेखइ प्रेम पत्रिका ) . Each word of this *Chautishā* is described a beautiful look of Heroine (नाइका). So, the absence of the heroine, the hero, is causing grief in the mind (खेदात्मक).

### Exaple -2.6.2 (कृष्ण बिछेद चउतिशा) *krushna Bichheda Chautishā*

The theme of this *Chautishā* is all about Lord Krishna and the situation is the separation of Lord Krishna from all Gopi's ( ब्रज किशोरी ) . Here *Braja kishori*'s are remembering all the past situation happened with *Lord Krishna* and also describing the best movements of *Krishna Leela at Gopaprur* and feeling very sad. Finally, they all are waiting to *Lord Krishna* for look for a way back.

## 2.7. (अलंकार चउतिशा) *Alankār Chautishā*

In generally "*Alankār*" means ornamentations or adornments but it takes a comprehensive role in *Chautishā* literature. Here a poet presented his/her finest poetic art on word formation as well as word decoration. It depicts a technical knowledge on literature of a Poet. According to different word formation *Alankār Chautishā*'s are classified in following types: *Jamaka Rāja Chautishā*, *Aadya Prānta Samān Chautishā*, *Jamak Kalpataru Chautishā*, *Jamak Shekhar Chautishā*, *Jamak Ratnākar Chautishā*, *Padānta Jamak Chautishā*, *Shrunkhalā Jamak Chautishā*, *Shrunkhalā Bandha Chautishā*, *Kokila Chautishā*, *Kamalākānta Chautishā*

## 3. Conclusion

So, the Chautisha is the best repertoire of Odissi music and has a major role to play in establishing the firm tools of this music style. But what is required is more research into the style of Odissi music. Both musicians and litterateurs should symbiotically work towards the revival and enrichment of this genre of Odissi music. By propagating Chautisha, not only will the new generation come to know of this age-old musical tradition, but also Odissi music will develop and enrich itself.

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