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# Musical Instruments as Evidenced from the Jain Art and Iconography in Odisha

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**Abstract:** Music has been an integral part of human life since early times. In Odisha, the earliest evidence of music and musical instruments associated with Jainism can be found at Khandagiri and Udayagiri hills both in epigraphical records and sculptural panels. This includes the Hathi-Gumpha inscription of Kharavela and the panels in Rani-Gumpha, Manchapuri-Gumpha, and Totowa-Gumpha 2, dating back to the 1st or 2nd century BCE. The sculptural reliefs featuring musical instruments reflect the refined and cultured social life of ancient Kalinga under the patronage of Kharavela. By the 10th and 11th centuries CE, musical instruments, particularly cymbals and drums, became integral to the depiction of Jain sculptures in Odisha and were considered one of the components of the *asta-pratiharyas*. Musical instruments are also sometimes depicted in association with attendant deities and related sculptures. Four categories of musical instruments—Tata (stringed), Susira (wind), Anavaddha (percussion), and Ghana (solid instruments) are represented in the Jain art and iconography of Odisha. Thus, the contribution of Jain art and iconography in Odisha to the development of musical traditions is significant and dates back to ancient times.

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## Introduction

Music varying in melody, pitch, harmony, rhythm, and timbre with the amalgamation of vocal or instrumental sound formed an emotional and sweet ambiance among the common masses. Music is pivotal in all living cultures, encompassing many aspects of daily life. It has been an integral part of the lives of the people since the emergence of ancient civilization. Music happens to be the earliest fine art in the history and evolution of human culture. It is a well defined statement that the culture of a nation is best described in music and allied fine arts (Mishra 2017)<sup>1</sup>. Available evidence corroborated that every civilization had a great cultural heritage of, both tangible and intangible, and music became one of the indivisible appendages among them. Music and musical instruments are an integral part of

the life of people in the holy land of Bharatabarsha. The oldest known musical instruments appear in the archaeological record from 40,000 years ago /40 Kya (Anton 2018)<sup>2</sup> i.e., old bone flutes found in caves in the Swabian Jura, Germany. Stone Bar Celts of Neolithic period (2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> Mill. BCE) found from Sankarjung, termed as litho phone by Paul Yule and B.K.Rath (Basa and Mohanty 2000)<sup>3</sup> are considered as the earliest musical instruments in Odisha so far. From these, it can be ascertained that even earlier musical artifacts/activities in the archaeological record will come into the future through forthcoming excavations or explorations.

Music and dance were very popular in India as early as pre-Vedic period and later developed into a considerable extent during the later Vedic period. The *Chhandogyopanisada* based on the *Sama Veda* explains three musical *metres* (*Chhanda*)- *Gayatri*, *Tristup* and *Jagati* for chanting and singing of the Vedic hymns in the appendage of *Vina* (*lute*) on the occasion of Vedic sacrifice (Jagadiswarananda 1336)<sup>4</sup>. *Vina* (*lute*), *Venu* (*flute*) and *Dundubhi* (*drum*) were the prominent musical instruments that continued in post-Vedic period.

By the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE, a new school embracing all branches of dance, song, and concert was known as Gandharva music, which developed out of the Vedic musical tradition. Literary texts like *Bharata Natyasastra* and *Naradiya Siksa* (1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> Century CE) provided enough information about the *Gandharva* school of music. *Naradiya Siksa* enumerates the word *Gandharva* as “*Gam*” means “*gana*” or vocal song, “*Dha*” for the artistic playing of musical instruments and “*Rva*” represents “*vadya*” or the musical instruments. Music, dance, and musical instruments have been the heart and soul of every Odia people since time immemorial. The idea of dance and music without musical instruments is difficult to accept. Therefore, these three elements- dance, music, and musical instruments- have been an integral part of religious rituals and social practices since ancient times. Although this tradition has continued since time immemorial, the earliest physical representations of these elements can be found in the caves of Khandagiri and Udayagiri, dating back to the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE. The Hati-Gmpha inscription of King Kharavela of Chedi Dynasty is one of the earliest epigraphical records which refers to the arrangement of festivals and social congregations along with performances of acrobatics, dance as well as vocal and instrumental in the capital city i.e., Kalinga Nagara in 3<sup>rd</sup> regal year by the Kharavela, who himself was well versed in the art of music (Padhy 2017)<sup>5</sup>.

The earliest evidence of music and musical instruments, both in the form of epigraphical records and sculptural panels, can be seen at the Khandagiri and Udayagiri hills. This includes the Hathi-Gumpha inscription of King Kharavela and panels depicted in the Rani-Gumpha, Manchapuri-Gumpha, and Totowa-Gumpha-2. Additionally, musical instruments, particularly cymbals and drums, became an integral feature in the depiction of Jain sculptures in Odisha during the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries CE. They are considered one of the components of the *asta-pratiharyas* (Heavenly tree/*kevala* tree, halo, tri-linear *chhatravali*, heavenly music, flying garland bearers, *chauri* bearers, lion throne, and emblem/*lanchnan*). Musical instruments are also portrayed in connection with attendant deities and associated sculptures.

### Hatigumpha Inscription (Mishra 2004)<sup>6</sup>

5L.Gamdhava Veda budho dapa nata gita vadita samdasaanahi usaba samaja karapandhi cha kidapayat inagarim [II] Tatha chabuthe vase Vijadharadhivasam ahatapuvam Kalimgapuvaraja nivesitam vitadha makuta sa[viluthita] chanikhita chhata

In the third year, versed in the art of music (His Majesty) made (Kalinga) nagari play, as it were, by arranging festivals and convivial gatherings, organizing performances of acrobatism, dance, as well as, of vocal and instrumental music.

**16L.**..... *patalika chatara cha veduriya gabhe thambhe patithapayati panatariya satahasehi* [II] *Muriya kala vochhinam cha choyathi amga samtikam turiyam upadayati* [II] *Khemaraja sa vadharaja sa bhikhuraja dhamaraja pasamto sunamto anubhavamto kalanni.*

..... (His Majesty) revived the *Tauryatrika* with its sixty-four branches that had been suspended during the time of the Mauryas. In fact, dance, music and concert which were altogether known as *Tauryatrika* or Turiya.

### Cave No.1 (Rani-Gumpha)

Rani-Gumpha consists of a double storied monastery covering three sides except the south-eastern side which is being open (Mohapatra 1981)<sup>7</sup>. The upper storey does not rest immediately above the lower one. It deserves a unique place among the contemporary caves because of its style of execution i.e. architectural design of the caves, narrative sculptural art depiction both of social and religious scenes with symbols like *srivatsa* and *nadipada* as the crowning element of the arches of its different cells, depiction of flora and fauna of the contemporary period and above all about the knowledge of hydrological engineering by virtue of good drainage system. Kharvela's Hati-Gumpha inscription is amply corroborated by sculptural evidences in the form of narrative panels at Rani-Gumpha of Udayagiri hill. The right wing of the lower storey of the Rani-Gumpha is sated with scenes of dance and music. The panel shows a richly carved pillar pavilion and where a troop of five-member female musicians shows their musical skills. Four of them played with different musical instruments like a long flute, many string harp, *mridanga* and another beat the face of the *urdbhaka* drum. The fifth one is in dancing posture, flexing her right leg and tilting the right foot, the left leg being stretched to the side. Her hands are also in a different posture.



Scene of dance and music, Lower story-right wing, Ranigumpha



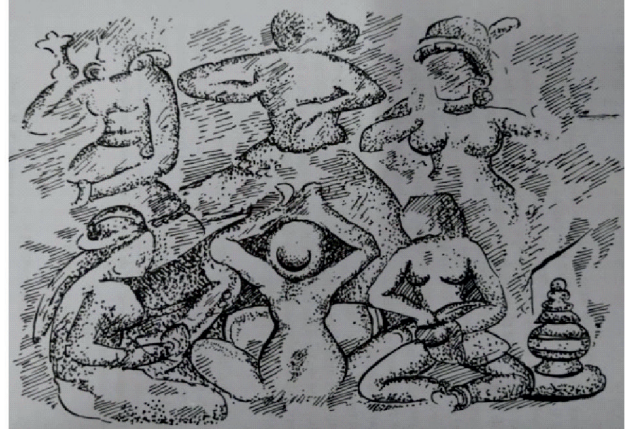
Line drawing, scene of dance and music, Lower storey-right wing, Ranigumpha

A worn-out frieze depicting the figures of dance and music is evidenced at the main wing, upper storey of Rani-Gumpha. Here we also noticed a five-member group, among which two perform a dance while the other three are played with musical instruments viz., drum, broad faced drum (*dundubhi*) and many string harp with a plectrum.





Scene of dance and music, upper storey-main wing, Ranigumpha



Line drawing, scene of dance and music, upper storey-main wing, Ranigumpha

### *Cave No.9 (Tatowa-Gumpha No.2)*

Cave No.9 or Tatowa-Gumpha No.2 is located on Khandagiri hillock and it has only one cell fronted by a benched pillared verandah. The ceiling of the cell is convex in shape and the floor is raised at the back. A *nandipada* symbol is found on the doorway of the cave and symbolic representation of sun and moon at the back of the wall.

The cut-out brackets in one pillar is carved with a splendor performance of dance and music. A female is seen with a graceful movement of hands and limbs in company with a male musical who plays on a beautifully designed harp (Sahu 1984)<sup>8</sup>. The lower portion of the figure is partially damaged now.



View of Tatowa Gumpha-No.2



Bracket figure with musician and dancer



Line drawing of the Bracket figure with musician and dancer

### *Cave No.9 (Manchapuri and Svargapuri-Gumpha)*

This Manchapuri-Svargapuri-Gumpha is premeditated in the style of Rani-Gumpha but is smaller in scale than the latter. It is a double-storeyed cave. Manchapuri-Gumpha is the lower and Svargapuri-Gumpha is the upper one. In the lower storey we found the depictions of *srivatsa* and *nandipada* symbol on the door frame of the caves and guard figures at the end of the pilasters. The most important religious scene in the cave is the depiction of worship of some Jain religious symbol, which rests on a high pedestal (Mitra 1992)<sup>9</sup>. Above this panel two pigmy *vidyadharas* in their shoulders carried come object which appears to be a *ghanta* is suspended from a pole. A *ghanta* generally creates loud tingling sounds which are considered highly auspicious and efficacious for creating a spiritual atmosphere.

### Rani-Gumpha as theatre

A scholar, namely Dhiren Das has strongly opined that Rani-Gumpha of Udayagiri hills as a theatre (play house) of *Vikrsta* (rectangular) type and of *Madhyama* (medium) variety as specified in the *Bharata Natyasastra* as the length of floor precisely measure 64 cubits (Sahu 1984)<sup>10</sup>. Simultaneously, there are a number of objections in connection with his opinion, like

A) *Bharata Natyasastrawas* written later to Rani-Gumpha.

B) All the caves including Rani-Gumpha were built for Jain *Arhats* those who were renounced their worldly sustenance. So, it is not possible to undertake dance and music in front the monks who are left their worldly desires to attained salvation.

### Musical Instruments in Iconography

Musical instruments are also represented in Jain images, such as those of the Tirthankaras, as well as in depictions of Yaksha and Yakshi, serving as key iconographical elements of Jain canons. These instruments are portrayed either as part of the *Asta-pratiharyas*, like *Divyadhvani*, or as *Lanchanas* (symbols). At times, they also appear as attributes of *Yaksha* and *Yakshi* figures. The musical instruments commonly depicted as part of Jain iconography include cymbals and drums for *Divyadhvani*, and the conch, vina, and bell as *Lanchanas* or attributes. The table below provides detailed information about these musical instruments and their associations.

Position	Tirthankara/Yaksha/ Yakshi	Armed	Attributes	Cognizant/ lanchhana	Associated Tirthankara
22	NEMINATHA	Two	conch	Gomedha (S) Sarvahana(D) Vehicle-Man or Horse	King Ugrasena- chauri carer
02	AJITA OR ROHINI	Four	S.- varada, noose, citron, goad. D. - varada, abhaya, conch, disc	Iron seat (D.) Bull (S.)	Connected with JinaAjitanatha. Ajita means invincible.
06	ACHYUTA OR SYAMA (S.) & MANOVEGA (D.)	Four	S. Varada, vina, bow, abhaya pose D. - Sword, lance, fruit and varada pose	Man (S) Horse (D)	Padmaprabha
07	SANTA (S.) OR KALI (D.)	Four	D.-varada, trident, fruit, bell. S.-varada, rosary, lance, abhaya pose	Elephant (S.) Bull (D.)	Suparsvanatha
17	BALA (S.) OR VIJAYA (D.)	Four	S.- citron, spear, musandi, lotus D.—conch, sword, disc &varada pose	Peacock (S.) Black boar (D.)	Suparsvanatha
24	SIDDHYAYIKA	Four	Book, abhaya pose, citrus & lute.	Lion	Mahavira
18	KHENDRA OR YAKSHENDRA OR JAYA	Twelve	S. -Citrus, arrow, sword, club, noose, Abhaya, bow, mongoose, fruit, spear, goad and rosary. D.-Bow, thunderbolt, noose, club, goad, boon-giving conferring posture, fruit, arrow, garland, etc.	conch or Peacock	Aranatha

An exception to the typical depictions is seen in the representation of Vajrasrinkhala, the Sasanadevi (guardian goddess) of the fourth Tirthankara, Abhinandanana, at Navamuni-Gumpha. She is seated



in a Lalitasana pose on a plain pedestal, with a monkey shown in a posture of folded hands, which differs from the swan traditionally prescribed as her symbol. Vajrasrinkhala holds a child in her lower left hand, a conch in her upper left hand, a chakra in her upper right hand, while her lower right-hand displays the abhaya mudra (gesture of reassurance). Additionally, a male figure is depicted playing a vina in one of the subsidiary images of Chandraprabha in Koraput. Some conical-shaped susira (wind) instruments are also seen in a Parsvanatha image at Pratapnagari, Cuttack (Sahoo, 2015).



**Gumpha-No.2**  
**Vajrasrinkhala, Navamuni-**  
**Gumpha**



**musician and dancer**  
**Parsvanatha, Pratapnagari**



**figure with musician and dancer**  
**Chandraprabha, Koraput**

From the above discussion, it is evident that dance, music, and concert collectively known as Tauryatrika or Turiya, and part of the traditional sixty-four arts were popular in ancient Kalinga well before the time of Ashoka, as evidenced by the Hathi-Gumpha inscription. Kharavela stands as one of the earliest incandescent personalities known to be proficient in the *Gandharva Veda* and his intense love for musical tradition is reflected in his activities, as mentioned in Hatigumpha inscription. The sculptural reliefs represented with musical instruments reflect the sensible and refined social life of the ancient Kalinga during the patronage of Kharavela. None of the scenes depicting dance and musical instruments at the twin hills of Khandagiri and Udayagiri are religious in spirit and practice. Musical instruments belonging to all the four classes mentioned in *Gandharva Veda* are found in the relief sculpture of Khandagiri and Udayagiri as well as in the loose Jain sculptures lying unconcerned manner throughout the state.

The musical instruments that are found in Jain art and iconography can be classified under the following groups

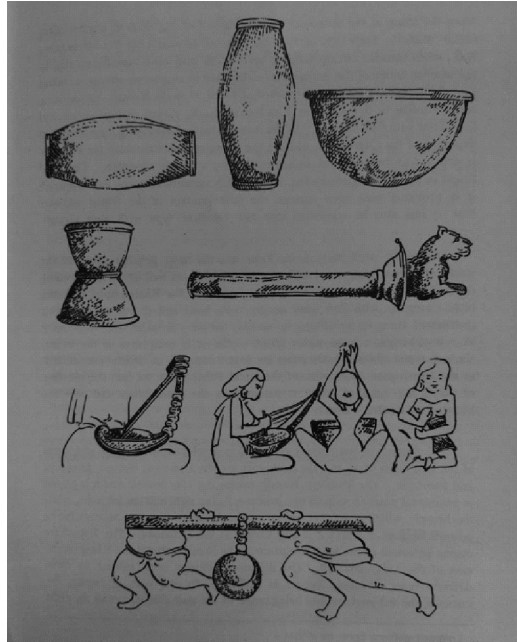
**Tata-** all kinds of stringed instruments- *Vina* and *Harp*

**Susira-** Wind instruments- *Venu* (flute) and *Samkha* (conch)

**Anavaddha -** *Mridanga* and *Dundubhi*

**Ghana-** Instrument of Bell metal- *Cymbals* and *Ghanta*

Thus, the antiquity of musical instruments in Odisha can be traced back much before then to Kharavela. King Kharavela not only carries on the tradition but also takes proper steps towards the revival of the musical tradition. Over time, musical instruments became an indistinct feature of Jain art and iconography. Therefore, the contribution of Jain art and iconography in Odisha in response to the development of the musical tradition is significant.



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