

## **An Analytical Study of Some Tribal Musical Instruments**

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### **Abstract**

*Have we ever thought that the Indian classical instruments that we play today have a connection to the tribes and tribal musical instruments of our country? Many of the Ghana Vadya, Avanaddha Vadya, Sushir Vadya and Tat Vadya that we play today resemble the tribal membranophones, chordophones, idiophones and aerophones.*

*We have read many stories about the origins of the instruments, one of them is about the origin of tabla in which there was a saint named "Swati Muni" who was once bathing in a pond and suddenly a light rain shower happened in that pond, so during that rain shower when the water drops of the rain dropped on the big petals of a plant, they created an unusually different sound which grabbed the attention of Swati Muni, he listened to those sounds very carefully, and suddenly went to his home (kufiya) and made the Tripuskar Vadya with the help of sand and animal skin which included the Urdhawak, Alingayak and Ankik which were mostly like the today's pair of table and pakhawaj/mridangam.*

*So similarly, we have many accounts about the stories of the origins of all other instruments that come under different categories, but the closest examples of the ancient instruments that we have already found are the tribal musical instruments, and now also those instruments are being played in some of the regions of our country.*

**Keywords**

*Artists, Indian, Tribal, Musical, Instruments, Playing, Vadya, Music, Tabla, Sitar.*

**MEMBRANOPHONE (AVANADDHA VADYA)**

Of all instrumental sounds, percussion membranophone occupies a higher position in tribal music and dance.

A category of the musical instruments, on which the main acoustic chain of events could be achieved on a membrane.

Considering membranes as the chief reverberating medium, we find different varieties of drum shapes like a kettle, having an iron resonating chamber covered with a strong hide.

In common we come across barrel-shaped hollow resonating chambers, and double opening sides of these drums are covered with goat or sheep skin. Invariably these barrel-shaped drums are laced with rope or leather straps or laced with leather toughs. The vocal sound accompanies the instrumental sound that can be termed as the chorale prelude or basically just the interwoven melody segment that assists partially an instrumental composition to the tribal orchestra.

In the world of tribal music, primarily the drummers' capabilities surpass the aurally generated emotions. A tribal drummer confines himself to rhythmising various time-beats that ensemble a wide range of human feelings. Even, perhaps many other subordinate instruments may not tend to offer glittering as beacons to enormously rich patterns in tribal membranophonic musicality.

It is hoped that this section reflects a new approach toward exploring rhythm-forms and sound variations on a chosen few varieties of tribal Indian drums and percussion.

Instruments of percussion are used to keep the time cycle in dances and songs, and thus thought to be the first in order of succession, the rhythmical effects in music strongly appeal to the mind of those Vanaputras.

With the drums played in groups, in pairs and solo no other instrument has so much appreciation, convention, and usage. The rhythms are comparatively simple and the technique of playing is not at all complicated. Such simplicity in manipulation has distinctly a primitive flavor yet does not sound less aesthetical.

The formation of a drum is a frame of earth, wood or metal, with a piece of a membrane stretched over either on one or mostly on both the sides. The normal shape of it is hemispherical, centrally constricted-shaped in an hourglass, cylindrical or a circular one. Broadly the instruments classified are included here in the sequence of a periodic set of intermittent beat values to complete a cycle.

Often the subjective quality of their membraned sound determines loudness. The resonating magnitude of auditory sensation produced by recurrent percussion sounds from these instruments sets a unit in vibration by striking or with combination of strokes and friction.

Variations in instrumental shapes along with classified categories of different sizes of the drums have sequential orders to cope with their numerous strokes and ornamental beat patterns. Broadly the drums manipulated with strokes have been sub-divided here into the following categories:

- Dhol-shaped (cylindrical type)
- Nagara-shaped (bowl type)
- Damaru-shaped (hour-glass type)
- Khanjari-shaped (rim-type)
- Ghat-shaped (pitcher-type)

Laced with leather or rope or leather toughs, manipulatory chain of events in those single or both covered ends are with a combination of fingers with intermittent strokes and rubs on the membrane surface.

#### **INSTRUMENT NAME – BIDI**

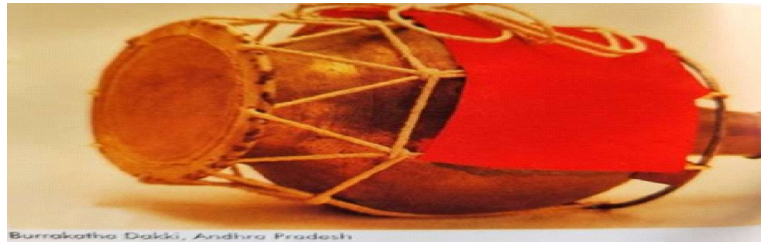


**CATEGORY** - MEMBRONOPHONE

**PLACE** - KARNATAKA

**DESCRIPTION** - A small deep clay bowl with skin covered face, tied with leather straps with the help of a hoop and holes. Slung from the neck, played with two thin sticks. Used in processions and religious ceremonies.

**INSTRUMENT NAME - BURRAKATHA DAKKI**



**CATEGORY** - MEMBRANOPHONE

**PLACE** - ANDHRA PRADESH

**DESCRIPTION** - A pitcher-shaped brass vessel with having short neck and round belly. The wider end is covered with skin with the help of cotton cord through hoops and an iron ring: Suspended from the neck, played by hands. Used by Burrakatha's balladeers.

**CHORDOPHONE (TAT VADYA)**

Characteristic features of a chordophone instrument commonly have a scooped-out, cup-shaped resonator, covered with a solid soundboard (table) or a stretched membrane. The convexed resonating body may be gradually narrowed towards the neck and continued into a straight-arm peg disc, scroll-head peg box or bent-back peg box. String may be one above the other stretched from this arm to the belly forming arcs to the crescent of the whole frame, passed through holes in the flat surface (wooden or parchment, sounding board or resonator) of the belly and pass through and fastened to the rounded underside.

**INSTRUMENT NAME - BURRAKATHA TAMBURA**



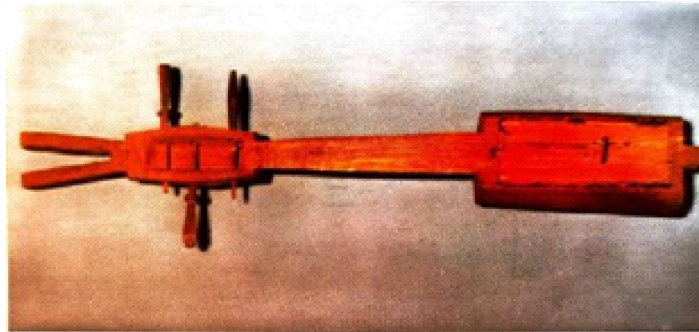
**CATEGORY** - CHORDOPHONE

**PLACE** - ANDHRA PRADESH

**DESCRIPTION** - Rounded belly, long neck, curved peg holder, all made of wood. Four strings - three of steel and one of brass. Main and secondary bridges. Decorated with inlay

work. Struck with inward and outward movement of fingers. Used in traditional form-  
“Burrakatha along with a traditional drum called ‘Burrakatha Dokki.

### **INSTRUMENT NAME – CHEMPRENG**



Chempreng, Tripura

**CATEGORY** - CHORDOPHONE

**PLACE** - TRIPURA

**DESCRIPTION** - Hollowed out of a single block of wood. A kind of fibrous leaf sheath of betel nut plant is fixed over the long cylindrical but flat front resonator. Contains three strings- of cotton and two of steel, played by striking with a plectrum. Used by the ‘Tripuri’ one tribe of Tripura for accompaniment with their group songs and dances.

### **IDIOPHONE (GHANA VADYA)**

According to the chronological evolution of instruments, the earliest instruments were used for making rhythm. Familiar survivors of this stage of development include the jingle bells worn on the legs to give sound to otherwise silent rhythmic movements. In this category, the magical effect on our auditory nerve sustains an acoustic chain of events like vibration of metal due to ringing sound when struck on the exterior part or by a metal tongue or clapper suspended inside. We also come across bamboo musical rasps with characteristic acoustic features like a friction stick passing through a slit bamboo stem forward and backward, resultantly producing two different notes. The knuckle-to-knuckle length determines the length of the note. Variation in the stridulant attack results in a change of pitch. The sound produced is low in pitch and can be varied by changing in friction speed.

### **INSTRUMENT NAME - BHAJAN CHAKKALU**



**CATEGORY** - IDIOPHONE

**PLACE** - ANDHRA PRADESH

**DESCRIPTION** - A pair of wooden clappers, with square ends and open slits, in which thin brass plates are attached. Clapped together by one hand. Used for rhythmic accompaniment with devotional songs.

**INSTRUMENT NAME – BORTAL**



**CATEGORY** - IDIOPHONE

**PLACE** - ASSAM

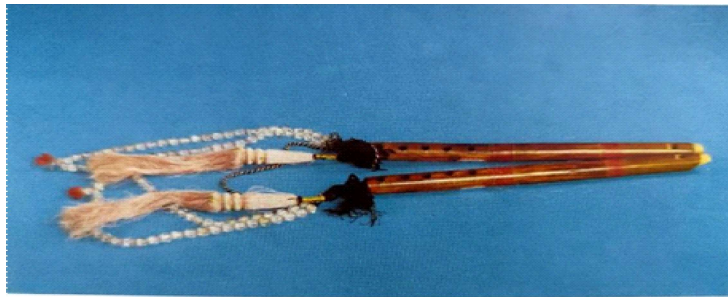
**DESCRIPTION** - A pair of large-size Cymbals, made of refined bronze metal. A huge ball-shaped depression at the center. Both the units are gripped separately and clopped. Used in various folk traditional forms of Assam.

**AEROPHONE (SUSHIR VADYA)**

Singa, Seengh or Kombu, Horn. Usually, an end-blown animal horn with a medium but a fine hole in the tip is prevalent in tribal India. Mostly the tribes take pleasure in the excellence of this blowing instrument. For carrying the horn, thin cord is attached with two

hooks. This is suspended crosswise from the shoulder while on a hunting mission. Every man has a self-made instrument. These are used on hunting expeditions for signaling purposes and for enjoyment. It produces usually a higher note (high-pitch), but with a change in the angle between lips and the blowing rim and variation in breath stream; thus, vibration in the air column allows for further one or two notes to be produced. With these few permutations and combinations of the notes, one may emit different signals during a hunting spree. The signals even refer to major accidental events like the death of an inmate, the successful homecoming, calling the hunters to retreat or halt and many other symbolic calls. During the annual hunting festival called Dishum Sendra at Ayyodhya buru (hill) of Purulia such bleating calls are often heard.

**INSTRUMENT NAME – ALGOJA**



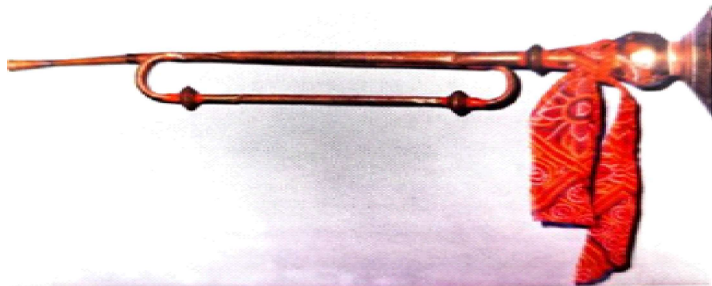
Algoja, Rajasthan

**CATEGORY - AEROPHONE**

**PLACE - RAJASTHAN**

**DESCRIPTION** - A set of two equal-sized bamboo, beaked flutes. Five finger holes and a fipple hole on each flute. Both the flutes are blown simultaneously by the player. Used by the 'Meo' community of Alwar, Rajasthan as an accompaniment to their folk and tribal songs.

**INSTRUMENT NAME – BANKIA**



Bankia, Rajasthan



**CATEGORY** - AEROPHONE

**PLACE** - RAJASTHAN

**DESCRIPTION** - A bronze trumpet made in two parts. "Bugle" like tube and a saucer-shaped bell with an integrated mouthpiece. Used in processions, and religious and social ceremonies in Rajasthan and neighboring regions.

**Conclusion**

From the time when we were Tribal and may have accidentally created a GhanVadya i.e., striking two stones together till the present when we humans have created Tabla, Sitar, Ghatam etc. We have come a very long way. In our Indian Classical Musical Books also we have studied that Bharat Muni created the TripushkarVadya which were Alingyak, Urdhavak, and Ankik, which are now Tabla, Mridangam or Pakhawaj. Similarly, there are stories about all the categories of the Instruments that we play and listen to today.

The art of instrument-making has developed a great deal over the centuries. However, the introduction of new technology and the usage of new materials have changed the method and tonal quality of many Indian instruments in the recent past. These innovations have taken place side by side with the arduous continuation of traditional skills and the use of materials. I hope that this study helps to disseminate information about the tangible evidence of the development of music in India and paves the way for generating fresh interest in the varied traditions of Indian music.

Now, in today's world, we may need to revisit the categorization of the instruments because now electronic instruments are being mixed with traditional instruments, one of the finest examples is about "Kuljit Bhamra" who is the CEO of Keda Music, made an electronic table which consists of two touch-sensitive plates which look similar to the surface of "dagga" and "table". So According to the categorization that we have already made, we can't put this instrument anywhere.

At last, I also urge the readers and students to preserve our tribal as well as our folk music and spread that as much as we can, because this is our root from where our present Shastriya Sangeet was born, as the "Deshi Sangeet" that we listen in our daily lives (Kirtan of sardars, ranges of Haryana, jagir of Uttarakhand, and there are endless examples) is our core, classical music is the finest outcome of this music.

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