Paschima Odisara Lokagita
(Essays on Folk Songs of West Odisha)

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To ignore the existence of this huge wealth of oral poetry throughout the world in the present as well as the past, is to miss one of the great sources and products of man’s imaginative and reflecting and dramatic faculties – of those things which mark him out as a human and a social animal.” (Ruth Finnegan-1997)

The compilation of essays written by twenty nine folklorists and folklore practitioners represent a picturesque panorama of oral tradition current in the cultural practice of the people of West Odisha. The writers belong to their localities and they have collected the oral songs and dances during performance context - i.e. dance, ritual, entertainment drama and play. West Odisha communities as a language area, Kosahli represent about 10 million of population and the language claims an independent identity for its own structure, grammar and function. The symbolic representation of Kosahli, the language of West Odisha has its own beauty of Indo Aryan language.

West Odisha as a land of forest and agriculture bear the symbol of close affinity of man with nature and supernatural power that regulates the thought, action and expression of the mankind. The images and alliterations, the symbols and similes, the eloquence and the taste of the songs in terms of its rasa and dhwani reminds us
to imagine the *Vaidarbhi reete* and *Prasad guna* which is the best expression of language in the country. The music accompanied in these songs have similar eloquence that attracts the listener and compelled to join in the group dance forgetting his self.

The songs are known as Rasarkeli, Jaiphula, Dalkhai, Gua-Nadia, Bhamara, Gunji-Kuta, Maila-Jada and so many. There are two types of songs that are most popular in West Odisha. One is three line songs and another is four line songs. Three line songs are composed as 8 + 11 + 8 syllables and four lines songs have 14 (8+6) syllables.

Three line songs have many honorific addressed like Sajani, Baria, Dalkhai, Jaiphula, Bhamara, Malire, Galara etc. Four line songs have addresses like Rasarkeli, and Jaiphula etc.

The cultural context of the song is important to understand the meaning of the song. The content is embedded with meaning in context. The combination of music, dance and song represents the harmony of body mind and spirit.

The essays are written with empirical evidence from the field. Women are the creator of folk songs. Males use to capture it through writings. Most of the songs are contextual. Therefore, there is no song in the community that is not used in context. The purpose and meaning of using the songs in everyday life reveals a civilization of living with creativity. A woman bears the burden of life by putting basket on the head but songs in the lips. When the day is the stark reality of the life, night is the dream and imagination. Pains are not to be forgotten, but to recreated in the songs to make it generalized so that life can be meaningful to loving struggle with inspiration.

Where songs dominate the life, where is the artificial melancholy? Where is the hollow man?

There are 29 articles, each representing a genre of oral poetry found in the cultural performances of the community. But there are more than 750 songs of these verities which are drawn from the lips of the singers and about 70 percent of them are women.

The effort initiated by Folklore Foundation, Odisha is a milestone in the field of folklore study in Odisha. Most of them belong to the villages. The scholars dance, sing and play music when the dance session goes on in the village in some occasion.

The strength of the compilation is that, while city folklorists of India lament on fast vanishing songs in the community, here are some scholars who enjoy, capture, document and disseminate the songs to show that orality is as old and as new as the human civilization, and in any point of time, orality cannot be ignored in the name of modernization.

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