

PART 3 – INTERVIEWS

4.

Padmashree Guru Maguni Das

Attendees:

CM: Dr Chitta Ranjan Mallia (Interviewer)

MD: Guru Maguni Das

Also present:

GKB: Guru Gopi Krishna Behera

LB: Guru Lingaraj Barik

RT: Dr Rekha Tandon

P: Prasanth

M: Michael Weston

Gotipua:

Dusamant

CM: Please share the memories of your childhood growing up in Raghurajpur.

How did you get attracted to Gotipua and what was its status back then.

And who helped or influenced in this, and anything else you started during those days?

MD: Where I was studying, in front of that institution was our temple of God.

In front of that temple there was a house, a stone house. In that house all drama rehearsals took place.

All the old timers lived there – Balabhadra Sahu, Mohana Maharana, Agadha, Brindabana Maharana, Batakrishna Maharana...

These people lived there and did their rehearsals there.

RT: And the name of his village?

CM: Your birthplace was Raghurajpur?

MD: Yes, it was Raghurajpur, and ours was the only Bengali house there.

CM: A Bengali house, but your family had been living there for ages?

MD: Yes, we have been there since the time of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu...

When he came, he placed at the mouth of that river what he was carrying on his shoulder... a stick.

Since then, a river called Dandabhanga has originated, and flowed to Puri.

CM: So that memorial is still present?

MD: Yes, still present, going to Puri, flowing through Mangalahati...

CM: What was your father's name?

MD: Kulamani Das.

CM: And mother's?

MD: Dongei Dei.

CM: How many siblings did you have?

MD: I have now two brothers... yes totally we are three brothers, three brothers and two sisters.

CM : What was your position? The eldest?

MD: The eldest, but before me five sons have died.

After my birth, my father prayed to various Gods that if I survived, he would offer his hair, food... many such things.

Before me, five children died. I was the first child. Then there was Ekadasi Das...

Then, after him I had two sisters, one was named Ainthas Das and the other, Sarada Das.

CM: So since childhood, by watching and listening to the rehearsals across from the temple, your interest grew?

MD: When I was studying, while they were singing and playing, I went and sat near them.

CM: What was your age back then?

MD: I was eight or ten years old, but back then no one shared their talent in the village.

If they did, others would get the talent and no one would recognise them. So no one shared their talent.

And no one was allowed to enter that rehearsal house. The doors remained shut during the rehearsal.

But I was the landlord of that house, so when I sat there, they couldn't refuse me.

They told my father, 'While sitting there, your son has started to sing and dance! He is learning everything!'

So my father asked, 'Can he learn this artform?' 'Yes,' they said. 'So why don't you teach him then?'

They said 'Yes' but they never taught me.

So I used to go there and sit, play *pakhawaj*, sometimes sing, dance and so on.

Their singer was Agadha Maharana. One day their Mohan Goswami called.

'Agadha, you need to go and play *khol*.' He said this.

He then called me and said, 'See, we are poor people, needy people...

If I am getting a job, then I'll earn some money and survive, so you go and do the singing.'

'How can I sing?' I said. 'You never taught me anything, never said anything, so what can I do?'

'Whatever you know is enough,' he said, 'even without being taught.'

'And if there are any errors, then our *dadas*, Mohan and Batukrishna Maharana will tell you.'

I said, 'Okay.'

'It is up to you now, you understand?' he said. 'You will do the singing.'

I said, 'Yes.'

I was twelve years old then.

Since that age, I played the *pakhawaj*. I played it so well, people were more interested in watching me play than seeing the children dance!

CM: Your playing was excellent!

MD: Boys of eight to ten years old were dancing and a boy of ten or twelve years old was playing *pakhawaj*.

From Dhyanamandala to many places, our Party went to dance. I went everywhere.

I went everywhere playing my instrument and making them dance.

CM: Who were dancing in your Party in those days? Kunja Gopala?

MD: Yes, Kunja Sain and Gopala Sain...

CM: They were from Raghurajpur?

MD: Yes... No.

CM: Kunja was from?

MD: Danda...

Audience: After that the Party worked?

MD: Yes, the Party worked, it was Gotipua. There was only one dance.

As there was one dance, then Odissi came, and ten to twelve girls started dancing.

You understand?

Then who would ask about Gotipua where only one single boy is dancing?

All the officers said, 'What happened Guruji? You seem to be in trouble.' I said, 'What do you mean?'

They said, 'A bunch of six or seven girls dance, and nobody's interested in your Gotipua.'

I said, 'Those girls learnt to dance here, but live at home. They eat, drink and stay in their homes...'

But I bring eight-year old children, educate them, teach them dancing and keep them in my house.

If I do all this, then I can only make ten or twelve children dance. I will need some time.'

They said, 'Okay then, do what you want to do, we will give you more time.'

This person, Dharendra Patnaik had come. He also said, 'You don't worry, you just keep the Party alive.'

'This will bring success to your future.' He said this.

The conversation then turned to Guru GK Behera...

CM: That was which year?

GKB: I don't remember those years!

CM: However, how many years have elapsed since then?

GKB: Since then...

CM: Between the 60s and the 70s?

GKB: Before the 60s and 70s.

CM: Okay, between the 50s and the 60s?

GKB: Maybe starting from 1955 to 1960 I stayed at Delhi. I returned in 1961, then I joined Annapurna.

I stayed at Annapurna during my time there. Wherever there was any opportunity, we went.

MD: Someone bought Annapurna or some *math* took Annapurna away?

GKB: No, it always belonged to Uttara Parswa Math. Even now it belongs to it.

CM: Sir, after meeting Maguni Sir, was there any opportunity of meeting him again?

GKB: No, there was no such opportunity as Annapurna was travelling to various places.

After travelling a lot, it returned during the monsoons.

During the Jhulana everyone gathered.

After gathering wherever people liked, some chit-chatting took place.

CM: When did you come to Raghurajpur?

GKB: I came to Raghurajpur many times, but usually when the functions took place.

They dragged me here... Even Kelubhai asked me to come with him. We used to come together.

CM: Did you have any connection to the Gotipua tradition?

GKB: Wherever there is dance, there is no such thing as my dance being different from yours. No difference.

Just, the dance should be elegant and done well. Only this will touch your heart.

If the performance touches the heart, you see it once, and you want to see it again.

This is the point.

RT: Can they talk about any time when they were working with Kelu Babu as well, together?

CM: When did you work with Kelu Babu? First Maguni Sir, you tell...

When did you get the opportunity to work with Kelu Babu for dance, song, composition or discussion?

MD: Kelubhai learnt dancing here, then Mohan Goswami took him away...

CM: He went away in Mohan Sundar's Rasa?

MD: Yes.

CM: So you had no opportunity to work with him?

MD: No.

CM: Even when belonging to the same village, you just saw or met him?

Only like this you have spoken or discussed with him?

MD: Yes.

CM: For Gotipua, was there any contribution by him?

MD: No, nothing.

CM: And he never danced Gotipua?

MD: Dance was about to start, but he left with Mohan Goswami.

He was poor, a destitute. He even lacked food and water...

He worked in a *paan* stall.

Mohan Goswami called and took them away. Thus 10 to 12 or 15 people left from our village.

There was poverty, they didn't get any food. *Pattachitra* didn't work. In the *paan* stall...

CM: Regarding Gotipua, did he ever discuss anything with you? Kelu Sir?

MD: Kelu Sir? No, nothing like that, no such discussion.

LB: When Gotipua began in Odissi Research Centre, he took all the Gotipua performers and did something. We saw that.

MD: Yes.

LB: That time he had contacted him (MD).

CM: It was maybe 1980 -82?

LB: No, after that, 1985 – 86 maybe.

GKB: One thing I should say, when Mohan Goswami's Party broke, he went to Kali Babu, right?

MD: Yes, yes.

GKB: There he stayed with Kali Babu...

CM: Kalicharan Patnaik?

GKB: Yes, Kalicharan Patnaik.

Back then, we were also there... Mayadhar (Raut), myself, Ganga(dhar Pradhan) and others... at Orissa Theatre.

Kelu Babu went and stayed there. He was a little taller than us, so he wasn't with the children or the elders...

He was somewhere in between! He did small parts, the role of a servant, this and that...

Then when the scene changed, he pulled the curtains...

Then he played the *table*. While playing *tabla*, other students danced, and so on...

And when Kalibabu's Party broke, he went to the 'B' group. In the 'B' group he played percussion and taught dance.

Then new people joined, and being the senior, he played the instruments and taught.

He himself even danced and demonstrated.

Then only after Dayal Sharan came, he got to understand dance techniques with the body.

After knowing about these things, he slowly got interested and so danced, taught the children, danced, taught etc.

CM: In the last forty, fifty years that you have been doing *sadhana* with the gotipuas,

keeping them, giving them food to eat, training them to be artistes,

Approximately how many have you nurtured like this? Is it more than forty or fifty?

MD: Yes.

CM: (To RT) More than fifty gotipuas...

RT: Now how many are in the troupe?

MD: When they grow up, they leave.

Gotipua (Dusamant): Twenty...

RT: And they go where? And what do they do?

Gotipua: They go to Delhi, Bombay, and travel throughout Odisha.

GBM: They went to foreign countries as well. Where? America?

Gotipua: Yes, America, London...

RT: When did your troupe first go abroad?

CM translates the question in Oriya...

Gotipua: We went to Paris...

CM: When did you go? Was it in 1992?

MD: Three boys and me... four people. We took Jay Sir with us to sing at Delhi. In Delhi... he was thinking I haven't married my children yet.

I haven't fulfilled my duties at home, so how will I travel in a flying vehicle?

CM: Maybe he would crash and die!

MD: He was afraid, so he asked me... what was his name?

CM: Rajeev Sethi...

MD: He said, 'Guruji, what will happen?' 'Jay will not go. What will happen?'

I said, 'Okay, let's go. What will happen will happen! What can we do?'

'What will happen? Let's see when we get there...'

So we went. I played the *pakhawaj* and sang, and the three boys danced.

RT: What did you perform?

CM: Which song had you sung then?

MD: 'Dekhibo pora assere'

'Prana Sangini.. Shri Bansidhara Besha Ku...' (*O Come Here to Behold My Soulmate Holding a Flute*)

CM: Can you sing just a line?

RT: And what was the response of the French audiences?

CM translates the question in Oriya...

MD: They gave us a lot of love. They liked it very much.

CM: Please sing us a line to know what it was like.

MD: (*Laughs*) Okay...

I sang this song.

GKB: The children did some *abhinaya* to this?

MD: Yes, they did *abhinaya*, and sang a little too. We stayed there for a month.

CM: For a month you performed at various places?

GKB: He wants to dance. Go do!

(Gotipua Dusamant gets up and dances, and Maguni Das plays the pakhawaj and sings...)

CM: Then Maguni Jena and ...

MD: Guru Maguni Jena used to do Kela Kaloni Mela as Sundara.

He came to our village to perform.

When he came...

I saw this boy and thought, 'Arre! This boy dances very well!'

'If we keep him for Odissi or Gotipua, he will be very good.'

So I said...

CM: How old was he back then?

MD: Nine or ten years old.

He was about ten then... Maguni Jena..

I asked him, 'Will you dance Gotipua?'

He used to sing and dance in the Kela Kaloni play.

I called him and asked, 'Will you stay with Gotipua dance?'

He said, 'Yes, I will stay.'

I said, 'We will then ask your mother. But you ask her first. We will then visit your home and ask your mother.'

'You say what you have to say.'

He said, 'Anyway we are poor and in need. If my mother agrees, then I will stay.'

I discussed this much with him, and sent people to meet his mother.

So the mother came, and I said, 'What do you say? Does your son give you any money?'

'No, he gives me no money. He performs for free.'

'Right, I will give you money. Take five hundred rupees. Take one thousand rupees...'

'You are poor. You are leaving your son...'

'Fine, I will let him go.'

So she agreed, and we got him...

RT: So it was a one-time transaction?

CM: Yeah...

When you keep children with you, like Maguni Jena, the money that you give them,

Is it given when people need it, or do you give it every once in a while?

MD: No, no. When they ask for it.

CM : On demand.

RT: And it is the same system today?

LB: They are poor people...

CM: So, it is the same system today, isn't it?

MD: Yes, yes.

CM: The same system continues.

MD: What they (parents) see is, 'My children went, there they studied, learnt dance, travelled nationally and internationally.'

'Why should we interfere or object?'

With poverty they are compelled to come.

CM: Everything he takes care of. So, considering that, they require some money when there is a need of that.

Suppose there is a function in the family, or something happens on a medical ground, or something...

Then they approach to Guruji, and Guruji gives.

This is the system that continues till now.

RT: Does it work satisfactorily?

(CM translates the question into Oriya...)

MD: Yes, yes. It works. Whenever they ask, I give.

GKB: *(Laughs)* Whenever anyone asks, he gives! *(Laughs)*.

CM: They know that their children are here and will be cared for.

(Screen blanks out)

MD: If their parents agree that their children can go to London, then we take them.

Till their parents don't say...

From them I have got the children, and to them they will return finally, why should I...?

CM: Who are those two? Basant and Laxman?

MD: Yes.

CM: Then their parents agreed?

MD: No, I called the officer... What is his name?

LB: Samantaray Babu.

MD: Samantaray Babu came...

LB: The Cultural Officer.

MD: Yes, the Cultural Officer.

Samantaray Babu came... he came in his car...

Basant asked me, 'Why did you bring Officer Samantaray Babu here?'

I said, 'We won't understand whether it is good or bad what he says in English...'

'If Samantaray Babu comes, then he will know what is good.'

'That is why I called him here. What is your objection?'

Samantaray Babu and his friends discussed with Sita Madam and explained some things.

After discussing, he neither went there again, nor did he come here.

CM: He stayed back on his own?

MD: Yes.

CM: Amongst all your students, who is the most prominent and dances or sings well?

Like that, tell us two names.

MD: Who all dances? All our children dance!

CM: All dance well. *(MD laughs)*.

Why does no one sing nowadays?

All concentrate only on dance. Why is singing neglected?

MD: Our...

GKB: It is all his fault! *(pointing at LB)*

LB: Why is it my fault? *(All laugh)* If children don't sing, what can we do?

CM: Is this good or bad?

MD: No, it is not good.

CM: Singing should be done?

MD: No, no... If children perform by singing as well as acting, this is extremely pleasant.

Or else it is becoming like a mime dance.

CM: Your contribution in saving this artform of Gotipua, now all have recognised your contribution.

Even the Government of India has recognised you, for which you have been awarded the Padmashree.

This is a big *sadhana* and achievement. In this accomplishment...

MD: I don't have anyone in Delhi to represent me, or influence the authorities for me to receive the Padmashree.

I don't have anyone.

Everyone was saying how they wanted the award.

From Bengal four people came to survey, and they listened to everything.

Then they reported that Maguni Das rightfully deserves it.

Why are the others making a claim?

CM: After receiving the Padmashree, how are you feeling? Is this the fruit of your *sadhana*?

MD: Yes.

CM: Or is this that, for so long, you kept the children and the artform alive, and this artform received a recognition on the national level? This must be giving you satisfaction?

MD: Another thing is, when I had my properties, at home 6 – 7 people used to survive off it. Then I sold all my properties and invested everything for this. Now 30 – 40 people are living off it.

CM: This is also another satisfaction.

LB: Yes.

MD: That Balia Gahira that you had seen, that was my property.

How else would the world see this artform?

CM: Here INTACH arrived and gave you a studio house. Did that help you in any way?

MD: Yes, yes.

CM: In that studio house rehearsals took place or the students stayed...

MD: Yes, they had built that themselves.

CM: So that too gave you some satisfaction, that this organisation is at least helping you.

MD: Yes.

CM: Currently how many people are living in the *gurukul*?

MD: Now there are 25 children.

CM: 25 children.

And are there more people for playing the percussion and singing?

MD: For playing the playing and singing, 5 – 7 people are there.

CM: 5 – 7 people.

How do you think the Gotipua artform will progress further?

What can we do for its good and for this artform to survive?

And for people to adore and admire this?

What can be done for it to develop further?

MD: Whenever they go to perform, they get praises. People say it's good.

Whatever money is earned, they can see that. So I distribute the money amongst them.

If some extra money remain, then good. Or else I distribute even that with them.

With this, so many mouths are fed. Money is given and taken. This transaction continues.

What more can we demand?

CM: This artform will then definitely survive?

MD: Yes.

CM: In the future too, it will survive?

MD: Yes, yes.

CM: The future is bright.

MD: Yes.

If I got greedy and ate everything myself, and not fed anyone else around me,
then my artform would have died. I am not doing that.

GKB: Another thing is, in Odissi, you go and sit in their events.

The thing is, if there is a function, who will dance? The Governor's grand-daughter will dance.

What will she dance? 'Mallimala Shyama Ku Debi' ('I will offer a jasmine garland to Krishna')

(Recites a bol)

It starts from here.

People say, 'If they will do all this, then let's go and chew some betel leaves and come back,'
and they go.

Then the Secretary's sister will dance.

What will she dance? She will dance some song, 'Nandapura', something like that...

How does it go?

(Recites another bol)

People will say, 'Let's go and drink some tea, then come back!'

Because of all this, people lose interest in Odissi.

MD: The attraction is lost.

CM: In this field, Gotipua has some innovation.

GKB: Gotipua can perform a variety of things.

LB: After some time even Gotipua will disappear.

GKB: This needs to stop.

I will dance Odissi correctly as it is. Why should I start dancing from the basics?

I had told this to Kelubabu. 'Look, Odissi is a yoga,

So do whatever you want with the dance form, but keep something of that in it.'

CM: What is so special about Gotipua dance? Its uniqueness?

What is there that doesn't exist in other artforms?

MD: No, no, I have spoken about this.

Gotipua dance is performed by just one boy, whereas in Odissi 6 or 10 girls dance.

In Gotipua just one boy, so people don't care about Gotipua. Thus the troupes broke up.

Whilst the others just did Odissi, I created *bandha* in Gotipua.

GKB: To attract the minds...

CM: I remember, when in 1985-86 I had come here, in those days he (MD) was in difficulty,

And people didn't have much respect towards Gotipua. Some even saw it with disgust.

What they used to dance is, they just demonstrated some simple *abhinaya*.

I remember, you might know this, I had asked, 'How to include *bandha* in it?' If we added *bandha*...

RT: (*speaks in Hindi*) The usage of the *bandhas*, was it a part of the exercises in the Gotipua training?

Or, as when you talked about how to use the *bandhas*, in items... in which way did they exist?

CM: Exercises were there.

But there wasn't much variety in them. One or two *bandhas*, that's it. Then it would finish.

The performance was oriented towards *abhinaya*.

There wasn't much (*pure*) dance, or rhythmic variations. It was musical. The emphasis was on music.

(*All discussing and RT and CM speak in English...*)

CM: The song 'Ame Odia – We are Odia', when did you do this for the first time?

I guess it happened here for the first time.

It was written by that person from Kendrapada, what was his name?

The person who wrote the song 'Ame Odia' from Kendrapada?

Prasanta, do you remember?

P: Das Babu.

CM: Das Babu?

P: Artabandhu Das.

CM: Artabandhu Das, he had written.

LB: Currently there is a person called Ramesh Das from Kendrapada, an Odia gentleman.
Back then when we had Darada Gotipua, he used to work in the Electricity Department.
He used to come to see our dance, this song he had written there. That was in 1984 – 85.

CM: In '84 – '85.

LB: When the Darada Organisation was there.

P: This song was taught there then? Yes?

LB: Yes.

P: First Darada. Even before that, we knew, there existed a song by the same name 'Ame Odia'.
Maybe when they recreated that older song, it entered Gotipua.
But the song 'Ame Odia', we have heard this in our childhood on the radio.

CM: The dance form of Gotipua, you have preserved for almost 50 years and you imparted this knowledge in the *gurukul* tradition.
What is your relation with the children who stay here with you?
Like a father and son, or like a Guru and disciple? With intimacy or not?
Can you speak about this relationship?

MD: The children who come here to stay, they eat here, dress here and go to school here...

CM: They left behind their parents and came here...

MD: They left behind their parents and came.
Maybe once in six months or a year they return to their houses on vacation.
Otherwise they stay here.
I as a Guru request their parents to not beat their children.
I am the one spending money for them, don't hit the children.
If you hit them, it takes five or seven days for them to recover.

CM: If the children are beaten, then you suffer.

MD: Yes. *(He quotes a proverb and explains it).*
If the child's mood is good then that day he will sing and dance very well.
But if you slap and abuse him before his dance, then he will be depressed, and the dance won't be good anymore.
This is the reason I forbid to hit the children.

How much effort one puts in to teach...

CM: It is then good to treat the children with a motherly affection?

MD: Yes, I teach them with that motherly love.

That is why they don't want to leave me and go elsewhere.

CM: In the Gotipua dance, from the point of view of aesthetics and further refinement, how can it be improved so that this artform will be appreciated and loved by the people?

MD: If a child sings a song well and acts along with his singing, then this will look beautiful.

But nowadays, someone else sings and the children just perform the *abhinaya*.

CM: Then why has the singing stopped?

MD: Why did they stop singing? So the singer can show off how well he can sing.

If five children sing along with the singer, then his singing does not stand out..

Do you understand this?

CM: That's why the Gurus...

MD: The Gurus are forbidding the children to sing but I don't stop them. I greatly desire for the children to sing.

CM: Earlier you used to have exercises and oil massages, do they still continue?

MD: Yes, yes, yes. The new children...

CM: The *kala sadhana*?

MD: Yes. Here on the river bank they will come to sit, then they enter the river till chest-deep water. And in that water they will sing ...

CM: After leaving the Gotipua dance, they join Odissi.

Instead of joining it later, if a combined class of Odissi and Gotipua could be conducted, then would there be any problem in learning?

They could learn some portions of Gotipua along with whatever refined aspects of Odissi they could imbibe.

For this would there be any problem?

MD: Those who have danced Gotipua, it is a different dance style from those who dance Odissi.

CM: How is it different?

MD: For them...

CM: It is very refined while this is a little (raw).

MD: Girls aged 20, 22 or 24 danced...

CM: With emotions (*bhava*)...

MD: Different things... but to these people, whatever one teaches...
They are children, they don't have much intelligence.
8 – 10 year-old children, what knowledge do they possess?
Whatever you tell and teach them, whatever they remember they perform.
And what they don't remember...

GKB: They move their arms...

MD: They move their arms. This is the thing.
(Others speak in chaos).

CM: Those who dance Gotipua cannot include the emotions (Bhava)?

MD: No. They don't have that level of understanding.

CM: Because of their young age.

MD: Because of their young age they don't have the knowledge.
What love is, or happiness, they don't understand. Whatever they are taught, 'Portray love like this...' Seeing you, they can copy.

CM: One question, why did Gotipua remain restricted within the Puri District's borders?
Why didn't it spread to other districts?
The way Odissi has spread everywhere, why can't Gotipua spread similarly?

MD: Gotipua was in our Puri District...

CM: Was created...

MD: Don't we go out and dance Gotipua in other places, and get praised for it?

CM: Yes, but everywhere people are learning Odissi...

MD: There are limited Gotipua groups, and they can't manage much. They are staying back while Odissi dancers are spreading everywhere!
No one enquires about Gotipua...

(CM: Each one (Odissi dancers) has started teaching at their own places...)

MD: Yes and...

GKB: Boys aren't learning anymore elsewhere... Boys only learn here.

MD: Yes, boys...

CM: That can be one reason, and the second could be that everywhere it's not possible to learn while staying with a Guru.
In Ganjam, the Sakhi Natcha, does it have any relation with Gotipua?

MD: I can't say about that.

GKB: No. no, no relation.

CM: Nothing? They have a different style?

GKB: They have *lilas* based on Radha's love, Krishna's love. They belong to a different category.

In Sakhi Nata, they are just making it more vibrant.

They keep songs, music and dance in it, but they make it livelier and more vibrant by displaying some twirls, spins and stunts.

They lack *bhava*, *bhangi*, rhythm and *mudras*.

CM: The Gotipuas, after learning the dance form, after having completed the training and performances,

when they get older like 15, 16, 18 or 19 years old, by then the sweetness for Gotipua is lost from their bodies.

At that time what should they do? Should they do farming, or go and learn Odissi?

MD: They go to Odissi.

CM: Or should they think about some work with Gotipua?

What can they do for their own good and for this artform?

RT: *(Speaks in Hindi...)*

People who go into Odissi have a lot of trouble

CM: But I do not agree because you see *(he continues in English...)*

there are a number of Gotipua dancers who have joined the Odissi Dance Akademi under Guru Gangadhar Pradhan who have flourished in a short span of time and have excelled others because of their Gotipua background. They could adopt easily and very quickly and because of the flexibility of their body, they could manage to go ahead with all these movements and of course the sophistication or refinement was not there which was polished in their Odissi.

RT: Which is whole point that is what in fact I also find when working with Gotipua dancers that potentially they can be so much better because the basic strength and basic flexibility in the body has been prepared from such a young age. That is why I feel why, you know if that kind of training is added to the *gurukul*, they would be at such tremendous advantage when they reach the age of 17 – 18 and they have stepped out into the world as dancers. They would have both, and they would have such a major advantage over Odissi dancers. And it is so easily done.

CM: So you think that the basic stage of Odissi should be introduced in Gotipua?

RT: I feel because the basic body language is the same. It works on the *chowk*, it works on the *tribhanga*, it uses *hasta mudras*, the grammar is totally the same. It is just a difference in degree of training and discipline.

CM: So it can work better and in a more effective way.

RT: It could enhance the Gotipua repertoire incredibly, and it would not detract from the *bandhas*, it doesn't detract from the ambience of the *gurukul*, it doesn't detract from anything. And it gives such a tremendous advantage at the point when, if they want to continue to be dancers, at that age when they are entering a very competitive field today, they would have, you know and incredible advantage.

CM: Let us seek his opinion, what he says here.

RT: Yes, that's what I would like to know what he has to say.

CM: The Gotipuas trained with you for about 8 – 10 years in the *gurukul*? Excluding the initial 3 – 4 years,

After that, when their bodies are set, at that time if the basic knowledge of Odissi is imparted to them, then in future,

when they leave Gotipua to join Odissi, they would do well in Odissi. They would display excellence.

MD: No, when they go for Odissi they don't have any difficulty. As soon as they go there, the foundation has already been laid.

CM: Her opinion is, if this was introduced and normalised, Gotipua training is imparted and they perform along with this,

if some basic things of Odissi were given to them during their training here, they would get more refined, before they leave to learn Odissi.

If this happens, would it be better?

MD: Our Gotipua is different. We perform and do everything in our own way, whereas Odissi dancers do it differently.

CM: This hasn't been thought about, or you don't think you need to?

MD: No.

CM: They have not yet thought.

MD: Wherever we go to dance, and Odissi dancers also come to perform, if we Gotipua are already dancing then Gotipua has greater demand.

GKB: Yes.

MD: Isn't it? Odissi doesn't possess such a demand.

CM: But when a Gotipua quits his organisation or team...

MD: A Gotipua sings on his own, acts on his own, dances on his own.

As he can do all these things, so he does well!

At the end, whatever little he lacks, he does a *bandha*, and that completes it.

CM: I am asking about his future as the discussion is about Gotipua's future.

After learning at the *gurukul*, and after leaving the *gurukul*, they will then have to look for a profession. Where should they go?

MD: No, they go for Odissi...

CM: Most go for Odissi?

MD: They all go.

CM: If some basic knowledge, some fundamental or essential knowledge of Odissi could be imparted to them.

If they got an opportunity or an organisation takes this task up, or an individual or dance Guru comes and conducts this?

If it is made and provided to them, then this would be better for their future?

MD: Yes, they would have learnt something beforehand, later it will not be difficult for them.

But we don't have any of this. We just follow the Gotipua pedagogy.

CM: He doesn't have that scope... who will teach Odissi and who will teach the basics of Odissi?

With this, they are happy, otherwise he said it is ok.

RT: You can ask one more.

CM: Guruji, after a Gotipua artist has trained under you, after completing his performances and programmes...

after that, say 8 -10 years or 12 years later, after he quits this organisation,

after that. do you help them in any way?

MD: Yes.

CM: How do you help them?

MD: Whatever help they require.

CM: If he ever requires money then do you provide any financial help?

MD: Yes, yes...

Recently there was an incident 15 days ago. A boy required money.

His father came to say 'What will I do? His mother is very worried. Please help me with 3,000 or 4,000 Rupees.'

His mother is worried, his father said so, and he took back his son.

I gave him money. I gave him 2,000 Rupees. He wanted 4,000 Rupees but I gave him 2,000 Rupees.

CM: You gave 2,000 Rupees?

MD: Yes. They both left with 2,000 Rupees. They stayed at home, looked after his mother, then the boy returned.

RT: Can he help students with placements at other institutes?

CM: In other organisations like Sangeet Mahavidyalaya, or wherever Odissi is taught,

to admit them in such places, did you ever try? If the student is interested...

MD: From our Party?

CM: Yes.

MD: No, no one goes. From my Party no such person went.

CM: After leaving here and going...

MD: After leaving, let them do whatever they want, they go for Odissi.

CM: Do you encourage them to go and learn?

MD: Yes, yes.

LB: If required, by going with them...

CM: They extend all morale support, and sometimes, if required, with some financial aid.

MD: Children go and stay, and sometimes visit my house.

CM: There are also those who study at Sangeet Mahavidyalaya...

MD: They all come to my house.

LB: Whoever requires, whatever they want.

CM: He has extended some support.

MD: Today I am poor because I always help. *(Laughs)*.

RT: This is a question very interesting to the West. What is the role of a Guru today?

What according to him is the role of a Guru today?

CM: Now the situation is... if you look back 30 or 40 years, and the respect and the role a Guru commanded then...

Nowadays, is it the same?

As a Guru, what is your opinion?

MD: Yes as a Guru... Those who are staying, they have it,

those who dance Gotipua with me...

CM: As a Guru, the respect towards you is the same as before, or has it reduced?

MD: To those I teach Gotipua, the boys who stay with me,

when they come back after quitting, they still have the same respect for me!

CM: No, in the society? How does the society see a Guru?

MD: What do you mean by society?

CM: I mean our society, our village and those all around. Is a Guru well respected by them?

Do they see a Guru as a Guru?

MD: No, no, there are many children who have great respect towards their Guru.

While there are other children who don't have this respect.

CM: It varies. The dignity, he feels... sometimes he gets and sometimes he loses.

Currently, your role as a Guru, is it the same as it was 30 – 40 years ago?

MD: Yes, for me it is the same.

If it was otherwise, would the children leave their parents and come to stay with me?

When they returned home, they would not agree to come back to me again!

GKB: Yes.

(CM and RT discuss the above point in English... M asks a question.)

CM: Currently the *gurukul* tradition is required, necessary?

MD: Yes.

RT: What do they have to say?

MD: That's what I am telling, I don't have any more place to accommodate more children!

CM: He says, the demand is such that he is unable to accommodate so many students.

Now, one more question for you.

Guru Gopi Krishna Behera, you have taught many people, you have created many dancers, you have directed many others at Annapurna Theatre, you have composed many songs, you have contributed a lot.

As a Guru, the respect and the role of a Guru, which existed before the 1950s or '60s, does it currently exist?

GKB: It is greatly present! Greatly present...

How? If I go to Bhubaneswar, all the school children come crowding around me and say 'Gopi Sir has arrived!'

They all come running. You can witness this too.

I don't know much, but whatever I have said has given happiness to all. Whatever I know.

I don't fabricate lies in the air, that is not my thing.

Whatever I have seen, heard or experienced with my body, I spoke about such things.

But when I think about how I can improve it, to those who are at higher ranks, I tell them 'You may wish to do but I cannot.'

Why? I don't have the financial or physical strength, thus I have lost my mental strength too.

You all do and show, I tell this to everyone! Now, if I ever need any material thing, they provide it to me.

CM: He says, the dignity has rather increased and well accepted, revered by students and the common man,

whenever, wherever I go, I get that respect.

And as the role of a Guru, he says, I have no strength – financially and physically – to make me more active,

but I suggest and encourage those who are in the field.

RT: And what does Lingaraj ji say?

CM: Nowadays there are many self-styled Gurus, after learning or teaching a little, they claim themselves to be Gurus.

What is your opinion about them?

LB: Let them do whatever they want, what can we do?

We want them to learn a little bit from us, whatever we have learnt...

CM: They should learn first...

LB: After having learnt from us, observe what we do, learn them then take that and utilise.

Understand what is right and what is wrong. They don't want to understand.

As Sir said, after doing something opposite of what was taught, they claim that to be correct instead,

and proclaim that they have composed it. This is the issue.

RT: ... And you have your own student, your own letter pad and your own programme, you become a Guru.

No, isn't that the case?

LB: From the age of 7, I have danced Gotipua.

While dancing, my business was to milk cows, farming and other agricultural activities.

CM: His hereditary profession.

LB: While staying at the village, whatever I learnt from my Guru,

by staying with Guru Markandeya Mahapatra, at Odissi Research Centre, like this I have spent my life.

At the end, today Gotipua would have been completely destroyed.

It survived only because of Guru Maguni Das's organisation at Raghurajpur.

By earning little money here, I took care of my family.

Today, people are cheating and fleecing money from his organisation.

But I, till date, I have not taken nor do I want to ask for it. May this organisation live on!

Darada, Dimirisena all shut down. Even I shut down thinking 'What money will I earn by dancing Gotipua?'

Thus I joined the Odissi Research Centre thinking I will learn some Odissi, if I learn something...

Today, I have experienced this, the Odissi Research Centre pays me 500 Rupees for one song, Ramahari Babu and...

CM: They gave you respect.

LB: They gave me a lot of respect.

But I understood this, because I knew Gotipua songs.

At Odissi Research Centre I could teach those old songs and earn 500 Rupees for a song.

For 100 Rupees I used to roam around to dance Gotipua.

For one programme that I used to dance I earned 100 Rupees, 50 or 55 Rupees.

Today that 5 Rupees has increased to 5,000 Rupees.

What I have to say is, may this Gotipua live on.

END