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THE MUSIC OF INDIA

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ABSTRACT

The Music of India is perhaps one of the oldest in the world. It is also a major system of music that is essentially melodic; and what is of great significance and interest is that it has retained this character to this day.

KEY WORD- Music of India , social pattern , own characteristic music and dance.

INTRODUCTION :

This is in contrast to European culture, for example, where the early melodic music has changed into the current harmonic music.

INDIAN MUSIC THROUGH DIFFERENT AGES

The social pattern of India today is the result of many ancient ones and the way of life on this land has been woven of fibres of different hues and textures. It is supposed that the Negrito races, the remnants of which

are still with us were the most ancient in India. The Dravidians, Mongoloids and Aryans were later cultural incursions. And the music of India today shows this cultural admixture.

The tribal people in various parts of the country-the Pulayans, the Oraons, the theSantals, the Savaras, the Chenchus, the Bhils and others-more or less isolated in pockets-have their own characteristic music and dance. This tribal music has contributed to a large degree to the general mould of our music. Another ancient form of Indian music was that of the Tamils and related cultures. This was also a melodic style with its own peculiarities. These forms of music gradually fused with Aryan music, ecclesiastical styles of which are sung in the *Rgveda* and *Samveda*. Slowly all these forms have come closer and become amalgamated into one another, a later strain coming from Central Asian regions and, of course, the latest is from the West. It is therefore essential to free oneself on many preconceptions about this music. First, is of the monolithic origin of not only the music, but the general culture of India. But what then is India? One cannot accept only the political borderlines, for cultural patterns overflow these walls and lines on maps. There can also be no rigid cultural barricades, for one social group passes into another, sometimes imperceptibly. And this subcontinent with its enormous extension is space has also a hoary past. The material and mental products of various cultures which were quite distinct in ages gone by-and this variety is evident even to this day-have had time to flow and dissolve into one another. The music of India ranges, then, from the grunts and shrieks of the Nagas in the far eastern border and the Todas in the southern hills, to the most sophisticated concert *raga-s* and *talas*. The result of such a give and take is the present day Indian art music with its two major areas-the Hindustani and the Karnatak. In general they have the same basis, being melodic and governed by rules of *raga* and *tala* structure. The Karnatak system is



the art form of southern India (Tamilnadu, Kerala, Andhra, Karantaka). The rest of India follows the *Hindustani* musical dialect.

The Hindustani and the *Karnatak* systems are only the highly grammatized music of the simpler art of the country. Naturally the bases and foundations of the art music have to be sought for in this soil of tribal, folk and borderline areas. And almost non-musical, yet with a 'musical' feeling, are the grunts and shrieks of the Todas and Nagas. But then these are the seeds out of which the complicated concert music has blossomed out. The flour-grinding songs of rural women grow into various folk songs, more or less intricate. Music in and of the temple is another tributary to the mainstream. *Vedic* music which concerned as a recitation of three tones ended as a seven-toned chant. In the temples and *math-s* (monasteries) music was, and still is, a vital part of meditation and worship. Through these simple *bhajan-s*, *abhang-s* and *keertan-s* the most profound mystic truths and socially reformative ideas were conveyed to all the populace. Thus Indian life is filled with music at all strata and levels. Classical music has, then, grown out of this fecund earth and in its turn flowed back into that soil. This is true not only of musical elements and forms but also of instruments. After all, the concert *rudraveena* is another version of the *Kinnariand jantar*. The *tablamight* well have been a progeny of a village pot covered with hide. The elaborate cross rhythms and drum mnemonics heads in the *mehfil-s kacheri-s* have been developed long long ago among the tribal Santals.

In essence, a raga is a melodic scheme governed by certain traditional rules, but providing a great freedom for improvisation. These rules define and determine the notes of a scale that should be used, their order, prominent and necessary melodic idioms which give a particular 'colour' to the scheme. Based on these more or less strict limitations, the musician is free to create and herein lies his genius. The raga has of course, to be pleasing: "A raga is called by the learned that kind of sound composition which is adorned with musical notes in some peculiarly stationary, or ascending, or descending, or moving values which have the effect of colouring the hearts of men.

The *tala* is a rhythmic arrangement of beats in a cyclic manner. Each cycle is complete in itself and is repetitive. The cycle is divided into sections which may or may not be equal. It is formed by the addition of time units in a defined manner. But what is of real significance is the closed or cyclic arrangement. This is the essential difference between *tala* and rhythm.

Within this framework, there are many styles of creating music. These vary according to their emphasis on rhythm, extent of ornamentation, lyrical qualities, etc. Some of such formal structural dialects and the *dhrupad*, the *kheyal*, the *thumari* and so on of North India, the *Kirti*, the *varnam*, the *padam*, the *javali* etc., of South India. In the more serious styles of music, the elaboration of a raga starts with a slow exposition called the *alap*, followed by a composition (a *cheeza* or a *kriti*) in a given *tala*, incorporating well designed melodic phrases and libretto, and faster phrases. Instruments in North India instruments generally follow vocal patterns and compositions.

The most ancient instruments known to us are the *venu* (flute), *veena* (harp) mentioned in *vedic* texts. As old as these are the drums. But a matter of great interest is the migration of instruments of India and Central Asia. The rabab is one such. The *kinnari*, a finger-board folk-instrument of India, is suggestive also of the *kinnor* of the Bible and the ancient Chinese *khin*. *Theshehnal* of our country and the *surna* of Central Asia are similar, oboe-like instruments.

Instruments (*vadya*) are considered to be of four types-*tatavadya* (stringed), *sushiravadya* (wind), *avanaddhavadya* (drums) and *ghanavaadya* (bells, plates, rods, etc.) Among the *tatavadya* are the *veena*, the sitar, *thetamboora*, etc. (plucked), the *sarangi*, the *dilruba* (bowed); the wind instruments are the flutes, the *shehnai*, *thenaferi* and the *nagasvaram* (India oboes); the drums comprise the *tabla*, *thepakhawaj*, the *mridang*, and so on; bells, rods, etc. are common though not generally used in concert music.

The music of India, a brief idea of which has just been given, is not only the proud legacy of this sub-continent but of the whole world. For without doubt it is one of the most highly developed and sophisticated musical systems of human society. Particularly, its micro-tonal pitch differences (*sruiti-s* as they are called), its melodic schema (*raga-s*) and the rhythmic subtleties of its *tala* are amongst the most cherished artistic contributions of India to world culture.

The highly developed and sensitive music was but the outcome of the ancient ecclesiastical and secular music. As in all other cultures, so in India, the religious groups, the chambers of aristocracy and the common people have each contributed to and fostered their own part in this cultural dynamics.

The common man who sang his sorrows, desires and achievements created the folk songs and ballads which are rich mines of musical and poetical gems-as varied as the peoples of this land. The *thumri-s*, the *ghazal-s*, the *padam-s* and the *javali-s* are very delicate examples of fine erotic love. But, by and large, the best music has been very closely linked with religious practices and mystic experiences. As a matter of fact, music is considered as one of the best forms of devotion and meditation. Musical compositions range, in this quality, from the strictly occultic recitation of *mantra-s* and the great songs of Muttusvami Deeshitar (1775-1835 A.D.), the religious love poems of Jayadeva (12th Century) and Kshetravaya (1600-1680 A.D.), and Tyagaraja (1759-1847 A.D.). Princess Meera, and with the love of Lord Krishna, and the mystics Kabir and Tiruballuvar have all contributed to the religious outpourings of this people. Rabindranath Tagore of our own times, was a versatile genius-a poet, novelist, dramatist and musician of the greatest beauty. His creations range from simple children's songs folk songs love songs and mystic songs to highly sophisticated *dhrupad-s*. He has created new melodic and rhythmic patterns of rare charm.

On the obverse side, there was also a dismal picture of music. For some centuries now this divine art was the handmaid of mere sensate pleasure. It was a constant companion of some of the most unhealthy sections of society which the rich and poor patronized equally. Consequently a class of musicians was in existence that was illiterate and uncouth and pandered to the most undesirable social needs. Five decades ago, to be a musician, in most parts of the country, was to be ostracized.

In the midst of this darkness a few brave spirits kept alight the flickering lamp, maintaining from generation to generation the rich tradition and adding to it new potentialities. With the turn of this century a class of scholars and musicians was born which was highly critical and conscious of social responsibilities. Vishnu Digambarpaluskar (1872-1931 A.D.) and Vishnu Narayan Bhat-khande (1860-1936 A.D.) of Maharashtra, various princely houses throughout India and a group of devoted scholars from South India fostered and popularized music, against many severe odds. Music became a respectable art again.

With the advent of political freedom, a new enthusiasm grew. Music, as other arts, is now recognized as an important part of culture and education. Besides professional institutions, schools, colleges and universities offer facilities for learning music and some have established Faculties of Music. Almost every town of some size has a music club where artistes-small and great-perform. The largest patron of music is the All India Radio, a government concern, with its innumerable stations. It not only broadcasts music but has on its staff a large number of well trained musicians who plan and produce its musical programmes.

Very significant institutions in the field are the Central and State Academies of Music (dance and drama). Established by the Central and State Governments, they are more or less autonomous in functions and primarily look to the encouragement of study, research, publication and archiving of music material and in a number of cases have been of considerable force in their spheres of action. Besides these there are a few private academies of very high standing.

A strong and influential force today is what is called the 'film music'. Some of it is good, based on the genius of this land and people. But much of it is a hybrid, vulgarized can-can, closely followed by 'orchestration', pop and such other varieties.

Indian music is now undergoing rapid change, mainly due to new ways of thinking and living as a result of contacts with the West. Technological devices with consequent urbanization and an enormous increase in the extent of media of communications have brought in new trends. The concepts of *raga* and *tala* are still intact: at least, *tala* has not undergone much mutilation. New styles are being preferred.

An adventurous spirit of enquiry and experiment in music is in the air. An idiom-to suit the new temperament-with shorter programming and quicker movement is establishing itself and there is every hope for active creative music in the future.

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