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Concerning philosophical foundations of Indian music

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Abstract

In Indian philosophical tradition, the word *sabda* (sound) has many levels of meaning. The technical meaning of *sabda*, apart from its ordinary meaning of just 'sound', is that one of the four *pramanas* (*pratyaksha*, *anumana*, *upamana*, and *sabda*). The concept of *sabda* however reveals more through going parallels between the two traditions. *Sabda* is *brahman*; *sabda* is with *brahman* from the beginning; without the *sabda* nothing at all can come into existence. The synthesis of art, literature, science, mythology, religion and philosophy the history of Indian music can be traced back several millennia and has been discussed in Sanskrit theoretical treatises for around two thousand years. Thus the historical background of Indian music is highly relevant in the context of this study for the proper understanding of its features and philosophical ideas relating to it. Like all the other Indian classical performing arts, classical music too is a journey of the *jeevatma* towards the *paramatma* or the divine. Indian music represents the emotions of the soul in the presence of nature. The origin of Indian music is said to be rooted in the *Vedas*. It is said that God himself is musical sound.

Keywords: Aesthetics, art, Philosophy of art, philosophy of music, samaveda

Introduction

Indian music is one of the oldest forms of music in the world dates back to nearly two thousand years and unique in that, it is highly spiritual in nature. It is impossible to divorce Indian music from the whole structure of Indian culture and philosophy with which it is interwoven in a number of ways from the earliest time of which we have recorded. The origin of Indian music is therefore considered as a divine. It is said that the musicians has to cultivate an attitude of self abandonment, in order to fuse with the supreme reality, *brahma*. *Brahma* is said to be the author of the four *Vedas*, of which the *Samaveda* was chanted in musical pattern. The essential spirit of Indian music is well preserved as it has been perpetuated through the ages. Indian music is based on oral tradition or the *guru-shishya-parambara*. The term *sangeeth* refers to Indian classical music and the phrase Indian music is used here in the sense of classical Indian music, the nearest English equivalent of *marga sangeeth* as distinguished from *desi sangeeth*, a terminology used by Mathanga in his *brihaddesi*. It is the type of music which is the least functional, the least commercial and intention wise the most artistic of all the music varieties. The art music of India exists only under cultivated patronage, and in its own intimate environment it is the chamber of music of an aristocratic society, where the patron retains musicians for his own entertainment and for the pleasure of the circle of his friends: or it is temple music, where the musician is the servant of God. In traditional Indian culture, aesthetic conceptions exist in all spheres of human expression. They assume definite form in the out parts of literature, painting, music, and performing arts. Moreover, Indian spirituality penetrates the aesthetic value and transforms them into religious values. The very controversial aspect of Indian music is the relation between *raga* and *rasa*. *Raga* is the pivotal concept of Indian music it is uniquely melody based and is a fine example of absolute music.

Philosophical ideas in Samavedic music

Vedas are the most important philosophical scriptures considered as the source book of both Indian philosophy and classical music and a rich store house of knowledge. *Veda mantras*

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have to be chanted in a specified cadence and rhythm. *Vedic* chanting puts the listener directly in touch with the universal source of energy. If this is done, the very listening to the *Vedic* chanting creates a tremendous beneficial effect on one's mental and bodily health. More important, by connecting us to a higher level of consciousness, they provide us a harmony of mind, body and soul, and therefore, inner peace. This source, powers the intellect, which controls the mind, when in turn controls the senses, which are ultimately canalized us to think rightly. *Gayatri mantra* is a highly revered *mantra* of the *Vedic* tradition. Just like all the *Vedic mantras* *Gayatri mantra* is considered not to have an author and like all other *mantras* is believed to have been revealed to a Bramarshi. *Gayatri* is the name of the *Gayatri* meter in which the verse or hymn runs. The word *Gayatri* is used in reference to the *Gayatri mantra* as an object of worship apart from being used as a reference to the divine entity described in the *mantra*. It is in the sense of *Gayatri mantra* as an object of worship that the music is personified into Goddess. The *Gayatri mantra* is repeated and cited widely in *Vedic* literature. Among the four *Vedas*, the *Samaveda* is an artistic way of communicating science. *Samaveda* is the earliest known systematic procedure for giving a melody to a verse meant for chanting. Each *Samaveda mantra* contains in it the deep meaning of music. The *Samaveda* is perhaps one of the oldest records of man's quest for mysticism and music. *Samaveda* is the *Veda* of *samans* or chants originate from the word *saman*. The music of *Samaveda* is commonly known as *Samagana*. The four type of *Samagana* where they are *gramageya*, *aranyageya*, *uha* and *uhya*. In *Samagana* there are references to the seven notes in the form of the following:- *Pradama* (First) - *Shadja* (*Sa*), *Dvitiya* (Second)- *Risabha* (*Ri*), *Tritiya* (Third)- *Gandara* (*Ga*), *Caturta* (Fourth)- *Madyama* (*Ma*), *Panchama* (Fifth) - *Panjama* (*Pa*), *Adisvara* (Sixth) - *Dhaivata* (*Da*), *Krista* (Seventh)- *Nishada* (*Ni*). The seven basic notes in Indian classical music are said to be the sounds made by different animals and birds:-*Shadja* -(The stream of a peacock), *Rishaba* - (The bellow of a bull), *Gandara* - (The beat of a goat), *Madhyama* - (The warble of a *krauncha*), *Panjama* - (The call of a *koel*), *Daivatha* - (The hare of a horse), *Nishada* - (The trumpet of an elephant).

Three pillars of Indian music-Philosophical analysis

Music is both art and science, art in the sense that it deals with the expression of one's feelings and emotions through sound, in melody and harmony, may be through its composition and execution. The essence of music thus consists in carrying the entire mankind into a feeling of oneness, an identity which unifies the musician, the listeners and the music which is created. Music is a science in the sense it is concerned with the systematic management of sound at all levels in the universe. In the study of Indian music, it is clear that the three main pillars of Indian music are melody, rhythm and *ragam*, the first referring to the melody of sound; the second is the basic tune pattern of music and third is the rhythmic pattern followed in rendering the music.

Melody

Melody is taken to be the most important component of Indian music. The ancient Indian music was actuated by its desire to explore its mystery and tended to proceed from its surface to its centre. This is amply suggested by its tonal movements a still prevalent and mainly 'melodic' in nature. Hence the music of the folk and tribes, of religious and sacramental chant and classical art-music have the common

quality of being based on melody. The typical forms of ascent and descent tend to differ in the same *raga*. A melodic is being constituted not by any of its notes individually but by the composite pattern of all its note intervals in their totality.

Raga

In Sanskrit the concept of the *raga* is found in the motto *Ranjayatiitiragah*. That which colors the mind is a *raga*. The *raga* is said to have been derived from the Sanskrit root *ranja* meaning to please or to color and indicating delight or appreciation. *Raga* is the central and predominant concept of Indian music. One of the prominent views regarding the origin of *ragas* is that, *ragas* are originated from the five different faces of Mahadeva, who is known as *Panchananan* having five faces. Five different *ragas* grew from these sources, while only one *raga* named *Nata narayana* arouse through *sakthi*, the Goddess and the beloved wife of Mahadeva. Five different *ragas* were linked to five directions along with the faces.

Table 1

| Name of the faces of Siva | Direction of the faces | Vedas and Sastras | Ragas |
|---------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| <i>Sadyojatha</i> | East | <i>Rig Veda</i> | <i>Sreeragam</i> |
| <i>Vamadeva</i> | South | <i>Yajur Veda</i> | <i>Vasantharagam</i> |
| <i>Aghora</i> | West | <i>Athara Veda</i> | <i>Bhairaviragam</i> |
| <i>Tatpurush</i> | North | <i>Sama Veda</i> | <i>Panchamaragam</i> |
| <i>Eashan</i> | Top | <i>Agama Sastra</i> | <i>Megharagam</i> |

The *raga* system forms the foundation to Indian music. The term *raga* in the musical sense came to be used when it was found that a group of notes having specific frequencies resulted in the creation or arousal of a particular feelings. This concept of playing or singing a *raga* at a particular time of the day or night, or at the time of one of the six seasons of India, can be considered an extra-musical aspect. *Raga* to be played between mid-day and mid-night have their predominant note in the *purva-anga*, they are called *purvaangas*. *Ragas* to be played or sung between mid-night and mid-day have in the *uttara-anga*, they are called *uttaraangas*. *Ragas* also correspond to crucial moments of sunrise, sunset, mid-day, mid-night, solstices, and equinoxes. At the present time, the concept of time theory is losing its importance, and is changing slowly.

Rhythm

The word rhythm (*tala*) is derived from the *tali* and is customarily accepted as a spontaneous expression of joy and cheerfulness. Centuries and centuries ago, rhythm was discussed by ancient musicologists who were saint musicians and their observations were recorded in various scriptures of antiquity. Rhythm is the most fundamental element in any form of music. It is the movement generated and also regulated by measured application of beats with the help of any suitable percussion instrument. It is also the creative and generative impulse in the very heart of the musician. Rhythm is spontaneous in any music, and the musician in performing music may unconsciously follow any particular rhythm which is suitable for his own creation in performing music. The rhythm helps the musician to improvise a vast network of complicated pattern of permissible notes which can be suitably expressed by a parallel complicated network permissible within the framework of a specific rhythm.

Inter-Relating Music and Yoga

Music has its essence in a deep sense of spirituality along with roots in yoga and Indian philosophy. The theme of the compositions is mostly devotional in nature, and many of them also convey abstruse philosophical concepts in a form that is easy to grasp. Indian music itself, when practiced with commitment, is also a form of yoga. Indian music has a tremendous effect on the mental state of human beings as it results in Peace concentration, relaxation, spiritual elevation etc. which are the principles of yoga and meditation. Yogic experience this state of mind is usually described as *nadanusandhana* or absorption in nada meditation which is the highest means of salvation of the many kinds of yoga, there are *nadayoga* is consider to be very important, *hata yoga pradipika* states *adinada* propounded on and one-forth core methods of traced and they are all extent. Yoga refers to the six plexus inside our body in this *vishudaha* chakra (with if petals) is linked with swara (voice). This voice is to most important factor in music. The practice of music itself can be powerful method of yogic practice. Traditional yogis still feed this way yoga is a pathway to grater enlighten consequently one needs to listen to ones inner voice, not to external influences. As the practice evolved, many people were in accustomed to complete silence. Music has an intrinsic power that enables one to explore the inexhaustible depths of yoga and scale the successive planes of yogic experience. Through the first one can be beyond very easily when we struck something however the second is recognized only by a yogi. After and instrument produced sound there is *varna*, which splits into two parts, one for music and the other for language. In music has *varna* has four classifications as *stayee*, *aarohie*, *avarohie* and *sahacharee*. Turning to the *vijnanamaya kosa*, music can contain deep meaning and wisdom that provides comfort and context for exploring and of life is success.

Raga and Navarasa- Philosophical relation

The heart of the rich tradition of the classical Indian music is *raga*. The primary philosophy of the correct interpretation of the *raga* is to develop a deep sense of self realization for the teacher and pupil, the performer and listener alike. The *raga* is definite, scientific, aesthetic, melodic form made up of a series of notes within the octave, each one different from every other and distinguished by its own particular sequence of notes, number of tones, ascending and descending orders, most prominent notes, notes of different lengths, characteristic phases and principal mood. If *raga* is the melodic core or microcosm of Indian music, *rasa* is its basic aesthetic appeal which enriches the *raga* in the domain of art, and infuses life into music. A proper assimilation of a *raga* with its inherent *rasa* is highly intuitive and no amount of logical or grammatical calculation can establish the authenticity of such assimilation. It is to be under stood either as an eternal feeling or as an eternal value as felt. Bharatha admits *rasas* to be basic which are *sringara*, *raudra*, *vira* and *bibhalsa*. There are four other *rasas* which are dependent on or derived from these fundamental *rasas*. The derived *rasas* are: *hasya*, *karuna*, *albudha* and *bhayanaka*. The more closely the notes of a *raga* conform to the expression of one single idea or an emotion, the more overwhelming the effect of the *raga*. In standard literature on musicology we come across a total of nine *rasas*. They are:- (i) *sringara* or love (ii) *karuna* or grief (iii) *raudra* or anger (iv) *vira* or enthusiasm (v) *bibhalsa* or disgust (vi) *hasya* or mirth (vii) *albudha* or wonder (viii) *bhayanaka* or terror and (ix) *santa* or peace or Tranquility. The *rasas* or the artistic experiences have been

always interpreted from a trans-empirical point of view. The notes 'Sa' and 'Ri' are both appropriate for the *rasas* of heroism, wonder and resentment; the note 'Da' is suitable for the *rasas* of disgust and terror; the notes 'Ga' and 'Ni' are suitable for the *rasa* of grief or sorrow and the notes 'Ma' and 'Pa' are said to be appropriate for the *rasas* of humor and love respectively. The distribution of *rasa* to *svara* is attributed to the spiritual vision of Mathanga is as follows:- *Sa* and *Ri- Vira*, *Raudra* and *Albudha*, *Ga- Karuna*, *Ma- Hasya*, *Pa- Sringara*, *Da- Bibhalsa*, *Bhayanaka*, *Ni- Karuna*. *Hasya* and *sringara rasas* are to be applied respectively through 'Ma' and 'Pa' *vira*, *raudra* and *albudha rasas* are to be manifested through the application of 'Sa' and 'Ri' *karuna rasa* to be revealed through 'Ga' and 'Ni' and *bibhalsa* and *bhayanaka rasas* are to be expressed through 'Da.'

Conclusion

Music of India is one of the oldest unbroken musical traditions in the world. The origin of Indian classical music goes back to the *Vedic* time when the *rishis* or saints, deep in meditation would contemplate different sound vibrations and tonal pattern and the effects it has on consciousness. Music in India was not a matter of sensuous enjoyment or a luxury to be enjoyed by the rulers and certainly not to amuse oneself but had a deeper meaning and objective. Indian musicians expressed philosophical and religious concepts through musical performance or composition. They emphasized on bringing the God, considered as the source of knowledge, power and wisdom nearer to us by working along the beauty aspects of the God. Man is considered as miniature of God with divine attributes. Man realizes the three value system of *satyam*, *sivam*, *sundaram* through *sravana* or education, *manana* or experience and *sadana* or practice. Thus in India philosophy and music goes hand in hand. Indian music has managed to overcome all the external influences and also has managed to retain the effervescence of value system. Indian music distinguished itself from the music of other parts in the world through its unique aesthetic understanding, its immediate association with religious thought, and it's all pervading spirituality. Indian music has grown into a full bloom lotus which, still today continues in its own glory emanating its ineffable ethos triumphantly conquering thousand of millions of souls in all corners of the world. The philosophical foundation of Indian music rests upon the solid rock of the realization of the immortal soul of music, namely *nada*. *Nada* is considered also to play the role as a potential medium to achieve a deeper unity with both the outer and inner cosmos. Certain vibration of *nada* seem to be agreeable at a particular time, while other are disagreeable at a particular time, while other are disagreeable at a particular time of the day.

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