

A Study on the Origin of Indian Instrumental Music

Dr. Soumya.S

Karnataka State Dr. Gangubai Music and Performing Arts University, Mysore, INDIA

Corresponding Author: soumyavenkataraju@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Music is found everywhere in this beautiful world. As every art needs a strong medium to express its apparatus and uniqueness, similarly, a musical instrument is a medium to express the musical 'Nada', which has significance all over the world. Instrumental Music has an important place in Indian Music. It is one of the threefold aspects of Music (Vocal Music, Instrumental Music, and Dance) also known as 'Sangeet' in Indian Music. The Instrumental Music is known as "Vadhya Sangeet". From the beginning of Instrumental Music, two components are very important- Instrument and the Instrumentalist or Instrument player (Artist). It is impossible to manifest music art in the deficiency of any one of the component mentioned above. Music is known as a direct way to convey feelings from ancient times. The present study assesses the origin of Indian musical instrumentation.

Keywords— Music, Instrument, Indian Classical Music

I. INTRODUCTION

Vocal music consists of strong words of any language and musical notes which are also known as 'Swaras'. While, in instrumental music, Swaras are same but Boles have taken place of any language which consists of words. The boles are played on the musical notes to produce music by Musical Instruments. For instance, in the compositions of plucked instruments, boles are played such as: Da, Dir, Dara etc.

Indian Classical Music, as explained earlier, is primarily individualistic. Our instruments are also, therefore, designed to be played solo. Indian Musician considers music as a medium to reach divinity and he therefore engaged in swara-sadhana (tone-culture) while singing or practicing instrument. He is so engrossed in his practice that he becomes completely oblivious of his surroundings and his personality merges in 'Nadabrahma'. The solo character of our musical instruments is in line with purely individualistic approach. Since, there are no fixed or pre-written compositions in Indian Classical Music. Every instrumentalist is a composer himself and has absolute freedom to handle the medium of his choice within the boundaries laid down by the exposition of a raga. Attempts have been made in recent times by eminent musicians to use Indian instruments in a group and produce an orchestra effect in the manner of orchestral musical composition in the West, but they have not been very effective. Most of the instruments sound weak and

ineffective in a group, since by conception and design, they are meant to be played only in solo and, therefore, are not capable of creating the desired musical impact.

II. HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF INDIAN INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

Musical instruments have played a very important role in the evolution and development of Indian Classical Music. There is a vast description available on history and development of Indian Instrumental Music. To understand this enormous depiction, an attempt has been made to divide it periodically on the basis of past, middle, and present period such as ancient time, medieval time, and present time respectively.

Ancient Time: (Pre-Historic / Pre-Vedic period to 1200 A.D.)

- a) Pre-Vedic Period And Post-Vedic Period
- b) Upanishads and Shiksha Granthas
- c) Puranic Sources
- d) Ramayana Period
- e) Mahabharata Period
- f) Buddha and Jain Sources
- g) Panini Period
- h) Gupta Period
- i) Tamil Sources and Kalidasa Works

III. PRE-VEDIC PERIOD AND POST-VEDIC PERIOD

3.1 Pre-Vedic Period

Pre-Vedic period is the most ancient time in the history of Indian Music. It belongs to the time about which there are no sequent evidences available today. According to available evidences of this time period, the instruments were mostly being used by humans during the religious occasions. Mohenjo-daro and Harappa civilisations are known as the most ancient civilisation of India. We can find a lot of pictures and sculptures of musical instruments which symbolize ancient state of Indian Music. In a picture of Harappa civilisation we find a man who is playing Dhol (the percussion instrument) near tiger. In some figures we find a kind of Drum which is seen hanging from the neck of a man. There is also an interesting picture of a woman holding a Drum under her left arm. For the manufacturing of Dhol, the prolonged and constrict skin of animals, which itself

had little sound quality, was framed to produce sound of considerable volume.

According to Captain Day, writer of "The Musical Instruments of Southern India and Deccan", the people of India have always been conventional in their tastes, and this is more evident in their music and musical instruments. Description of these people is found in many of the old Sanskrit treatises, and shows that forms of the instruments have hardly being altered during the last two thousand years. Old paintings and sculptures, such as those of Ajanta, proves this even more conclusively. There are many musical instruments found among the sculptures existing upon various old cave temples and ancient Buddhist tops and stupas in different parts of India.

The sculptures of musical instruments were also found in Amravati and Sanchi. In Amravati, one of peculiar interest shows a group of eighteen women playing upon drums, a shell trumpet or sankha, one much like a surnai, and twainstruments, apparently qunanuns, of a shape very similar to the Assyrian harps.² At Sanchi, a figure of a man blowing a kind of trumpet-the sringa-of much the same shape as now employed in Bengal.³

3.2 Post-Vedic Period

Vedic period belongs to the time in which four Vedas were formed. The literature available firstly, in the vedic period is the main root of Indian Culture. There is a vast description about the music in the vedic times.

All three dimensions of music namely vocal music, instrumental music and dance were popular at the time of Rigveda. The employment of music, which has been inseparably connected with the vedic rituals and ceremonies to propitiate God, was conceived even as early as the Indus Civilisation. The Sabarabhashya, a commentary on Jaiminiya Sutra, defines the 'Giti' as a kritya which is internal and is audible only in the form of Swaras. There were a lot of synonyms for Geet like 'Gatha', 'Gayatra', 'Giti' and 'Sam'. Gayak (singers) were called as 'Gattuvittam', 'Gayatrin' or 'Gathin'. When the Richas of Rigveda were formed in musical notation (by Swaras / Notes), they were known as 'Stotra'. Vocal music was accompanied by lot of musical instruments in the Rigveda. 'Yaga' was the most famous religious ceremony during the Yajurveda. For the ceremony of Yagas, four people known as four separate Ritviz, were fixed, they were called as 'Hota', 'Adhvryu', 'Udgatha' and 'Brahma'. Veena was played at the time of Ashwamedha Yagyas. There were professional musicians during the period of Vedas, who were specialised in particular instruments, for instance veena-players, tunav-players, conch-blowers, aghati players and kahala players. Tunav was wind instrument while Kahala was something like modern Shahnai. In the Yajur-Sanhita, veena has been described as string instrument and the Vana was also the biggest form of this veena. Other kinds of Veena, namely Aghati, Ghatlika or Apghatika, Kand Veena, Pichchola or

Pichchora stambalveena, Taluk Veena, Godha Veena, Alabu, Kapishirshni and Karkari or Karkrika etc., were also used during Yajurveda. Atharvaveda is specific among all four Vedas. Dundubhi, Aghat and Karkari etc have been described as main instruments of Atharvaveda. Also, Samaveda is very important in the reference of Indian Music. According to Jaiminiya Sutras, Geeti is known as Sama. Sama can be sung with the help of Rigveda Richas. But the original form of Sama is hidden in the Swaras. According to vedic literature, different Samas can be sung on the same Rig, which differentiates Sama and Rig. Some of the famous instruments of Rigveda are Dundubhi, Vaana, Nadi, Venu, Karkari, Gargar, Godha, Ping and Aghati. The sound of Dundubhi has been described as sound of clouds.

Veena was commonly used for the string instruments. Vana was the most popular string instrument of vedic period. Among string instruments we find references of vana in Rigveda. In the whole of Rigveda, instead of veena, vana has been mentioned which was a bow-shaped harp, which sometimes contains hundreds of strings according to Sayana, the commentator of the vedas. Vana appears to have been of two kinds; 'Greek Aeolian harp' and 'Bow shaped harp'.

Greek Aeolian harp had hundred of strings tuned in unison and sounded by the gust of wind. Sayana, the commentator of Vedas, named it 'Marud-Veena' the veena of the Wind God. Bow shaped harp was played with a curved piece of cane like wood. It is interesting to note that in ancient Sumeria, there was a similar instrument, called Bana. This was also a bow-shaped harp. 'Va' and 'Ba' are frequently interchanged, and so even the name of the instrument was the same both in ancient India and ancient Sumeria. A similar instrument in ancient Arabia was known as 'Vanna'. Either the instrument travelled from India to Sumeria and Arabia or from Sumeria to India and Arabia.⁴

Another string instrument mentioned in Rigveda and Atharvaveda is 'Karkari'. Sayana, the commentator of Vedas, said that it was a particular kind of instrument, but does not specify what kind of instrument. Monier Williams, Wilson, and Apte consider it to be a string instrument, but do not specify what kind of instrument. Another string instrument was known as 'Kandveena'. Kandveena was made by combining together bamboo joints and stretching strings on it.⁵

The main musical instruments, which were in use during Yajurveda, were Veena, Vana, Shankha, Tunav, Dundubhi, Bhumi-Dundubhi, and Talav etc. Aghati was used as symbol for indicating rhythm. In the Atharvaveda it is named as Aghata. Among percussion instruments, the one most frequently cited in the Vedas is the 'Dundubhi'. Nowadays in Northern India, there has been a slight variation in the type of the instrument, but the general structure has remained the same. In the Dundubhi there were two drums - one big and the other smaller one. It was made by hollowing out a block of

wood and stretching an ox's hide over the mouth. It was played with a stick. It was played mostly during wars in the vedic times. Later on, it was played in the king's court and the temples. 'Bhumi-Dundubhi' is another drum mentioned in the vedas. It was an earth-drum which was made by digging a hole in the ground and covering it with hide. It was played with a stick at the time of sacrifice. The stick was generally made of the tail of an ox. 'Vanaspati' was a wooden drum. Another drum that is usually referred to is 'Adambra'. Its exact shape and structure are not known. 'Gargara' was another drum used during the wars. It is an onomatopoeic word. It is used to produce the sound 'gargar'. Among wind instruments we find a mention of Nadi or Nallika. Bakura, Tunav and Shankha (conch) were other wind instruments. Venu or Bamboo flute were also used. Coming to the Samhita period (5000-4000 B.C.) when the four vedas were composed, we find information about music in Rigveda although Samagana is mainly related to Samaveda.⁷ Taittiriya Brahmana mentions Tunva, Veena, Dundubhi, and Sankha. Sayana regards Tunava as Venu and Talava as the one who played Kahala, although Talav appears to be an instrument also. Aitareya Aranyaka in a beautiful passage describes human body as 'Daivi Veena' and shows its close similarity with 'Manushi Veena' i.e. veena made by man, of wood, tantris etc. Veenas at that time were bow shaped, resembling harp, though some were straight. The lower part of the veena was made of hollowed wood called 'Ambhana' whose front part was covered with stretched leather. Aitareya Aranyaka called it 'Lomshen Charmnasspihita'. The bow shaped Veenas were called Vanas and can be seen in Bhaht sculpture.

3.3 Upanishads and Shiksha Granthas

Upanishads are the main source of Indian Ideology. Upanishads are known as mysterious literature manifested with the retribution of all the Karmakadas with the Gyankandas of vedic times. Upanishads were created as a form of appendix of Brahman Granthas. So, it is a basic necessity to study Upanishads carefully for a deeper insight into Vedic Music.

Samagana is very much admired by Upanishads. Geet, Veena, Panav and Lasit are known as components of the Mantra brahmanopanishad which is related to Samaveda.

"Hasitam Ruditam Geetam! Veena Panavlasitam! - - !

The Upanishads and Sutras also provide some information, mostly about musical instruments. Chandogyia Upanishad (8.2.8) indicates the honoured place which Gita and Vadya enjoyed even for the ones who have attained self realisation, and gives a beautiful description of upasna karma on the basis of Samagana. Sankhayana Shrautasutra gives a detailed account of the making of 'Shatantri Veena'. It also mentions some other instruments. Among them was 'Kanda Veena' which was also called Ghatari and was played by plectrum. 'Picchora' was played like a sushira vadya. 'Alabu Veena' had a tumba slightly crooked like

monkey's face in the upper part. Many of these instruments were played by women.

Veena has been mentioned in Chandogyia Upanishad. 'Dundubhi', 'Shankha' and 'Veena' are also found in the literature of Brihdarnyak Upanishad.

Shiksha Granthas plays a pivotal role in the form of Vedang literature which has protected the vedic tradition throughout History and maintained it for the study of the vedas. Naradi Shiksha of Samaveda has a detailed account of Swaras (musical notes) used in Samaveda, Rigveda and Yajurvedas. The sixth section of Naradi Siksha provides descriptive information about the Gatra-Veena, Shruti and Vritti of Samaveda. In Gaan, two types of Veena have been described: 'Darvi Veena' (or Kashthmayi Veena) and 'Gatra-Veena'.

The Samgana is sung accompanied by 'Gatra-Veena' (which is played by fingers) (1, 6, 1-2). Narada has given the qualities and drawbacks of Vocalist and Instrumentalist in his Ghandharva Subjective Granthas.

IV. PURANIC SOURCES

The purans also contain detailed information on Indian music. They give information mostly on creation, dissolution, recreation, divine genealogies, age of Manus, genealogies of kings, philosophy and yoga etc. But some of them contain information on poetry and music also. They are veritable ancient encyclopedias giving information practically on all subjects known to ancient India. Hariprasada Shastri said, "Anything old may be the subject of a Purana, and it covers all the aspects of life." There are eighteen Maha-Puranas and eighteen Upa-Puranas according to the traditional view.⁹ The various Purans were compiled in different periods. The earliest of them was contemporaneous with the Mahabharata. Information on music is available mostly in Vayu-Purana, Markandeya Purana and Vishnu-Dharmottara Purana. Harivamsa is, technically speaking, a supplement to the Mahabharata. Some include it among the Puranas. A good deal of praise has been bestowed on Harivamsa for a type of musical performance known as 'Chalikya'. It was a Gandharva type of singing accompanied by a number of musical instruments. It is said that the six grama-ragas were implicitly involved in it and it could be acquired only by very arduous practice. Only Krsa and a few gandharvas knew how to stage a performance of Chalikyia. There were two types of Chalikyia- group 'Chalikya' and 'Solo Chalikyia'. It was a type of music accompanied with dance and acting. In later times, the words Chalika and Calita were also used for Chalikyia. Veena, Venu (flute) and Mridanga were the instruments of accompaniment that were generally used in Chalikyia Music. Krsna is said to be the inventor of Hallisaka group dance which developed into Rasa. In Harivamsa, Krsna is the main center of various musical activities. The following musical instruments were in use - Veena, Vallaki, Mahati among string instruments; Panava, Dardura,

Anaka, Muraja, Mridanga and Bheri among membranophone instruments; and Venu among wind

instruments. The following musical instruments have been mentioned in Vayu Purana (about 500 A.D.):

Tata Vadya	Sushir Vadya	Avnaddha Vadya	Ghana Vadya
Yantra Vallaki Veena Tumba Veena Kachapi Veena Mahati Veena	1.Venu 2.Gomukh 3.Govishan 4.Shankha	Panav Mridanga Bheri Pesi Turya Adambra Dignidam Mardal Muraj Pushkara Alingya Jharjhar	Ghanta Mani Kiddiki Kanchi Parivhatak Bhekhla Kalaap Nupur

V. CONCLUSION

In Markandeya Purana (about 900 A.D.) also, there is a reference to the seven notes, grama-ragas, murchnas, seven varieties of vocal music, three varieties of laya (rhythm and tempo), forty-nine tanas, and four varieties of musical instruments (string, membranophone, wind and cymbals). The following instruments are particularly mentioned – Veena, Venu, Dardura, Panava, Mridanga, Patah, Anaka and Dundubhi. So these musical instruments play important role in indian musical context.

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