

AN OVERVIEW OF THE FUNDAMENTAL ELEMENTS OF INDIAN MUSIC EDUCATION – TRADITION AND PRESENT CONDITION

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Abstract

According to the Indian tradition, the entire world is believed to have been subject to Nada. Due to this, music education has been given due importance since ancient time. There are four aspects of music education, they are, Theory, Technique, Knowledge and Art. If we look closely, we find that systematic study of these four elements have been always the mainstay of Indian music education. Due to which, it becomes necessary to know and study these four elements as the fundamental elements of Indian music education. In the present time, due to the changed education system and lifestyle, we see that these four basic elements of Indian music education are not being studied in a detailed manner.

Key words: Pada, Jhala, Padanyas, Aamad, Thaata

INTRODUCTION

Education is the way of bringing knowledge, skills, beliefs and traditions of an individual or group to another person or a group of people. It has been a traditional practice to provide education through stories, debates, direct training, amendments and instructions. The goal of education in the Vedas was to create sound and language for the expression of ideas, and the goal of grammar was to develop rules to understand the expression of those ideas.¹ The term 'Education' in the English language comes from the Latin word '*Educare*', which means to nurture or to enhance. The term '*Shiksha*' in Hindi language came from Sanskrit language which means instruction, study or learning of discipline. Education is considered to be one of the six *Vedangas*, which gives direction to phonetics and theory of sound. For example, refer to the following verses in which Acharya Sharngadeva has thrown light on the process of the manifestation of sound in the human body.

आत्मा विवक्षमाणोऽयं मनः प्रेरयते, मनः। देहस्थं वह्निमाहन्ति स प्रेरयति मारुतम्॥

ब्रह्मग्रन्थिस्थितः सोऽथ क्रमादूर्ध्वपथे चरन्। नाभिहतकण्ठमूर्धास्येषवाविर्भावयति ध्वनिम्॥

Desirous of speech the individuated being impels the mind, and the mind activates the battery of power stationed in the body, which in its turn stimulates

the vital force. The vital force stationed around the root of the navel, rising upwards gradually manifests *Nadain* the navel, the heart, the throat, the cerebrum and the cavity of the mouth as it passes through them.²

FINE ARTS AND MUSIC

When we start practicing about the form of arts, we understand that the arts expressed by the shelter of beauty or elegance are called Fine Arts.³

- Music
- Poetry
- Painting
- Sculpture
- Architecture

These are the five types of fine arts. These arts are connected to human behaviour and emotions. That is, an art whose expression requires elegance and beauty, and whose creation is mainly for entertainment. Music is one of these five fine arts. We can only hear and feel music, it can neither be seen nor touched, hence, musical art is considered 'abstract'. But music is most capable of making an impact in our mind. Hence music is considered to be the best of all the fine arts.

Music made a place in the society during the Vedic Age. In the 'Rigveda', the oldest text, music is said to be the main practice of merriment for the *Aryas*. The invention of many musical instruments occurred during the time of the Rigveda. In 'Yajurveda', music has been described as a means of livelihood for many people, then 'Samaveda' came, which is considered to be the main text on music.⁴ 'Samaveda' mentions three vowels in terms of pronunciation and seven types of notes in terms of music. The song (*Samagana*) of Samaveda resembled the religious music of Mesopotamia, Akkad, Sumer, Assur, Surah, Jerusalem, Iran, Arabia, Finland and Egypt.⁵

नादेन त्याज्येत वाणी पद वर्णित यदा द्रचाः।

वचसो व्यवहारौवं नादाधीनं जगतः।।

That is, there is expression of letter from *Nada*, word from letters and speech from words. All behaviour depends upon speech only. The music is entirely based on Sound or *Nada*. *Nada* permeates everything in the universe. Therefore, the whole world is subject to *Nada*.

In Raga, emotions are expressed through musical notes and rhythm. Hence music education has been given importance in Indian culture since ancient times. According to Yajnavalkya Rishi, Music is a type of Yoga, which is both practicable and applicable that expresses its pleasant nature. Thus, music is to worship in which salvation is believed to be attained.⁶

BASIC ELEMENTS OF INDIAN MUSIC EDUCATION

Five main elements of Western music education have been considered, which includes, harmony, melody, rhythm, texture and form. But if we consider Indian music education, then it seems that its expansion, wide variety of concepts, associated rituals, oral practice and tradition of education cannot be incorporated in Western music. After pondering deeply on this subject, we understand that there are four basic elements of Indian music education.

- Theory
- Technique
- Knowledge
- Art

We can gain the proper knowledge of these four elements only through learning Indian music and exploring the Indian music traditions.⁷

THEORY (SHASTRA)

Raga and Tala are the foundation elements of Indian classical music tradition. With the reference of Raga and Tala, playing with the rhythm and musical notes, and their intended movements become possible. In this regard, Raga and Tala are considered as the firm foundation of Indian music theory. The rigorous discipline of Raga and Tala forms an integral part of Indian classical music.⁸

There are many Ragas in our classical music in which similar musical notes are used, also there are Talas using same number of beats (*matras*). Despite this, the

difference between them makes it clear that it is all about theory. There is no doubt in the presentation of Ragas created with similar notes and Talas created with same number of beats. The reason behind this is that due to the discipline under theory (*shastra*) of Raga and Tala, each Raga and Tala has their own independent existence. The Ragas using similar notes have been established on the basis of the theory of Consonance (*Swar-Samvaad*). The division, Taali and Khaali of Talas of same number of beats has become clear only because of theory, not only this but also the recognition of diverse singing and dancing forms became easy. For example, we do not call Thumri as Tarana and Dhrupad as Chaturanga; Quaida is not called Relas and Paran as Tukda. All are addressed with their independent nomination and have an independent meaning, which is theoretically accepted.⁹ The specific sequence of musical performances is established according to the style of each tradition (*gharana*). Such rite of the tradition is considered to be their individual discipline. *Gharanas* have their own different values. There is a discipline and thought behind it. For example, why don't the singers start their singing directly from the Antara or why don't the stringed instrumentalists start playing with Jhala? These doubts might be irrelevant, but if we follow the practice of theory, it is found that every aspects of performance and presentation has a proper system which directs a proper way of execution. In other words, what should not be done in the practice of music, where to give pause, what it directs towards, what is invalid or incorrect, all these can be termed as 'Theory'.

Theory is more related to intelligence. However, for the creation of music, it can only be changed according to the need but staying within the theory as a boundary. For example, according to the theory, while expanding or elaborating Quaidas in Tabla, only the *Bolas* used in the Quaida should be elaborated. But the use of certain *Bolas* can be used in a specific way while elaborating and the bond of theory can be loosed, and the beauty of presentation can be increased at its level. It is also the ability of theory to be flexible and not rigid for performance and presentation. It is necessary to have an ability to mould the theoretical aspects for being a proper musician.¹⁰

Every genre of music has a kind of discipline in its expanding style. This discipline is so intense that at times we can identify the Gharana or the style of an unknown artist with the discipline and execution of his/her presentation. This

is the existence of theory and its strength. If there will be no theory, then self-dependence can flourish and the music rendition may be directionless, which means that while living in the frame of theory, we have to practice abstraction to reach a free state that will show the path of salvation, i.e. our music and culture. The immortality of dignity and the feeling of freedom by staying in a boundary form the unique bond of Music Theory. At present, music universities give more emphasis on learning and teaching of musicology. Examinations like Ph.D., NET etc. can be qualified only through theoretical practices. Seminars, lectures, research papers etc. emphasize the discussion on the theoretical aspects.

Music theory is the study of the practices and possibilities of music. It has three sub-parts: the first is the rudiments such as aspects, characteristics and features of music; the second is learning scholars' views on music and the third is musicology that seeks to define processes and general principles in music. It deepens our ability to understand the structure of music and allows us to interact with other musicians in a common language.

TECHNIQUE (TANTRA)

In the Dasbodh Granth, Saint Sri Ramdas Swami has addressed those who teach dancing and singing as '*Tantraguru*' (Teacher of Technique).¹¹ It means that Saint Ramdas states this form of art as '*Tantrakala*' (Art of Technique) that can be experienced truly. Without technique (*tantra*) one cannot be able to expose suitable expressions while singing or dancing.

How the singer should use the voice effectively, how to dominate gestures like *Aakar*, *Ukar*, *Ekar* etc., how the musician should handle the instruments, how effectively the dancer should use gestures and expressions, all these matters through their technical practices. Our body is directly related to technique that is why vigorous *Riyaz* (practice) and hard work have to be endured in order to attain '*Tantra-Siddhi*' (Enlightenment of Technique), which has no other alternatives. While singing holding long-breath, resting on steady notes, extended notes, *Gamakas*, *Meends*, *Khatkas*, *Bol-tanas*, *Tana* patterns etc. to establish these qualities in our voice special vocal techniques are practiced.

In the same way, the dancer maintains the balance of dance, inflow, flexibility, agility, chasm, various gestures using wrist and neck, along these components,

khade-bolas, half-feetbolas, feet bolas, thata, rela-bolas, poetic content etc.; in order to assimilate these activities, a rigid system of techniques has to be practiced. The music system demands a wide variety of spiritual practices too, which makes music a subject of full-time practice. The artist has to spend a long time for the cultivation of technique in order to present the performing art in front of an audience fully through the body, which is quickly assessed by the intellects. Technique is a never ending topic. It can also be termed as a kind of yoga practice. Only through proper technical practice, enlightenment can be attained.¹² For example, Pandit Bhimsen Joshi's *Aakar*, Hirabai Badodekar's *Taar-Shadja*, Kesarbai Kerkar's voluminous voice and tana-patterns, Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali Khan's rule over all the three registers, all these became popular only due to their proper practice on those aspects. Pandit Vishnu Digambar Paluskar used to say that if a Palta is played or sung hundred times, it is remembered; on practicing the same Palta five hundred times, one cannot forget it in his whole life, but on repeating the same one thousand times, that Palta becomes absolutely perfect and freshened.

Music is termed as '*Tejomaya Sadhana*' meaning the practice that enlightens.¹³ Energy in music can be created only through the cultivation of proper technique. Technique should be so deep that in expressing the musical intent of the artist's mind, he should not face any obstruction or hindrance of it. We see that all the legendary and popular artists of the music world are on the high position in the practice of techniques. Due to incomplete or weak practice in techniques, there might be a lack of direct presentation of higher thoughts and this type of music will be unable to leave a mark. It is important for a learner to practice the techniques in front of a musically learned person so that he/she can guide. Getting the necessary mental health required for the practice of techniques is also a big challenge. Many music seekers learn music while taking some other education too. Most music seekers also learn music while doing some work or business. In such situation, the time required for practice starts to decrease and despite having proper knowledge or training; the lack of practice reflects in his presentation. Vidushi Prabha Atre states that practice of musical notes is similar to drawing a line on water that immediately disappears.¹⁴

Musical technique is the ability of musicians to exert optimal control of their instruments or vocal cords in order to produce the precise musical effects they

desire. It is independent of musicality. It can be classified as: (i) the practice technique which includes self-reflection (*chintan*), planning for better voice modulation, working for improvement and master on certain aspects of music, and concentration and dedication (higher attention span); (ii) the performance technique which includes execution of musical style and improvisation, interaction with the accompanists and feedback of the audience.

KNOWLEDGE (VIDYA)

Music is known to be a form of art, similarly it is also known as a form of Knowledge (*Vidya*). Talking about the wideness of musicology will be a very difficult task. Saint Dnyaneshwar says – ज्ञानेसीउपमाज्ञानेचीगा, that means, the analogy of knowledge is knowledge only.¹⁵ The prevalence of much knowledge is incompatible. To say briefly that in the field of music, all Pandits, Gurus, Ustads, elderly persons, performers and learned persons have the knowledge of Ragas-Raginis, Chhote Khyal, Bade Khyal, related forms of Alap, Tanas, Bola-tanas, Gamaka, Meend, Khatka, Thumri, Tarana, Chaturang etc. all these parts of Indian classical music, musical elements related to string and wind instruments, style of presenting Peshkars and Quaidas in tabla solo recital and related compositions, Thats related to dance, Aamad Tatkaar, poetry, Gat-Nikaas, all dance forms are related to Musical Knowledge (Musicology).¹⁶

Before this we came to know that knowledge is wisdom and technique is based on practice. So we can say that knowledge makes one intelligent. Acceptance, assessment, compilation, remedy, planning and remembrance of learning can be done only through the shelter of the intellect therefore the intellect is the place of knowledge.

In our ancient musical tradition, Gharanas of singing and dancing existed. But an artist of any of the Gharanas may be learned and experienced, if he/she is asked if he/she knows the entire knowledge of the Gharana in which he/she is being trained, the reply of that artist will simply be 'NO' and there is no doubt about it.

The Gharana in which we practice throughout our life and in which we become a representative, in that situation, it will be useless to speak about the knowledge of the other Gharanas. We know that knowledge is the greatest form of learning. We commonly experience that when we listen to an artist from a distant region,

new things come to forth, such is the splendour of learning. In the above, we learned the importance of technique contained in the art of music, but beyond that is technique and what happens is knowledge. The artist works diligently for technique and the challenge of learning remains in front of his practice. Once this great form of learning has come to realize that what we are not getting can be practicable, then the mind-set and kindness of enjoying it starts getting ready within the music seeker.¹⁷ Music can be called as huge and deep as an ocean, and our ability is to take as much as two to four drops of water from it, which makes a sense that some knowledge has been gained. With the mere feeling of this indefinite expansion of learning, many artists who are enjoying the sky of knowledge should come to the ground level for some moments and spread the knowledge to music seekers and learners so that the expansion of knowledge will be prideful. Knowledge itself proves that music is superior to an artist. After preparing a student well, when the teacher (*guru*) sends him to another capable teacher to take further education, the elements of learning becomes prideful. Knowledge is not the personal property of anyone; it is the aim of the true seeker to get it from a good teacher (*guru*) to become a qualified disciple (*shishya*).

Musical knowledge refers to the understanding and application of the organisation of music. It is imparted to a *Shishya* (student) by his *Guru* (teacher) and it is the disciple's responsibility to apply it accordingly for his development in music. It can be gathered through musical socialization and form various books on music. It increases the confidence level of a musician.

ART (KALA)

Art means beauty or beautiful. Art means formation of *Rasas* (sentiments) and enjoyment. Art is the natural appearance of flow that can easily be revealed. Art is that which fascinates all the common people. The art of music is the fruit of hard work and practice. The first thing that attracts the mind of a person is art. A deep thirst for this art is considered to be the real property of an artist in the world of music. It is the inspiration that the artist gets to do rigorous penance of its cultivation; it will not be unfair to say this.¹⁸ Theory of music works in a macroscopic way whereas art works as microscopic form. Theory immediately tells what is wrong, and what is right. But art reveals worthiness and unworthiness. In our aristocratic tradition, the art-forms have been repeatedly recycled in various forms; art means the individual expression of an artist.

Artist's own vision or creation is the art of the artist focussing on the abstractness Raga and Tala elements. Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali Khan considered Raga Marwa as *Vira-RasaPradhan* (heroic sentimental) and presented it in that way. But Ustad Amir Khan had a different view and presentation of the same Raga. The Raga is the same but the views and thoughts of both the artists were different. This is what the art is all about. Now the question may arise whether art can be taught? If the answer to this question is not found, then does art come without learning? The answer to these questions will not be the same. Then how will this art be practicable? Gurus continue to express the art elements through musical presentations. The action by which these art elements reach the disciple is called *Sanskaara*, education can be on a very thick level, but *Sanskaaras* proved to be more subtle, comprehensive and extremely important till the end of one artist's life; from presentation and practice to ethics. As a means, it is considered to be an important characteristic of a good teacher (*guru*) to teach this technique of art to a disciple (*shishya*).¹⁹

Just as theory is related to intellect and technique to body, likewise art is related to mind. It is more important from the point of view of art that the *Guru* who wants to inculcate the values of art to the disciple results in the mind and not in wisdom. Art can be expressed only through the medium of theory or technique. But this element of art is associated with emotions and emotions are related to mind. A result or effect is produced by theory and technique, but if there is no sense of art in it, then it will only remain miraculous. The effect that is attained by the magic touch of art is long-lasting. The difference between the presentation of the great and ideal artists and their disciples, who blindly follow them, is mostly due to the vision of the exposition of art. This is what the *Gurus* try to convey the disciple as the form of art. It is the real element of the *Guru-Shishya* tradition to transmit this vision to the disciple in such a way that he/she can view the art-form in true sense.²⁰

In the present time, there seems to be a lack of such competent *Gurus* who can enrich the eyes of his disciple who wants to learn the art-form and the social condition that nourishes such artisans has also become negligible.

“Music is an art form of expression, it should bring the inner side of an artist to the surface and give the world an insight of his vision, it is a form of communication” – Martin Landsky

Music is a performing art form of artistic expression or application of creative skill and imagination, appreciated for its aesthetic and emotional content; which is performed by artists (musicians) in front of an audience. All musicians have their own style to execute this form of art. Music has a capability of shaping human behaviours as it impacts our emotions.

FUNDAMENTALS AND PRESENT STATUS OF MUSIC EDUCATION

It seems that in the present day, music education is predominantly provided in the school education system. One can say that the existence of the *Guru-Shishya* tradition in its original form has become negligible. At present, we see that the entire emphasis of the education imparted by the school system is limited to the learning and teaching of the prescribed syllabus.

In this article, the four fundamental elements of music education that has been discussed, is hard to find that reaches to a small number of students and teachers. The nuances of theory, the mastery of technique, the infinitely great form of learning, and the profound effect on the mind of art, it is necessary to have a long and true training from a qualified master and an uninterrupted practice of self. In today's time, it seems that there is more study of the same aspects such as theory, the information of Ragas, rhythm, grammar, and history of music is available in colleges and universities, but less effort is taken to understand the technique, learning, art-form etc. All these components are hardly seemed to be taken in a serious manner by the learners in today's world. All that could be done in today's time of dazzling media is that the music seeker or learner who follows the path of restraint and reverence, only he can study these fundamental elements of music education seriously and properly, as it seems. In the present time, the craving to accept the immense knowledge of the music world has diminished. Students can barely remember bandishes of each Raga and memorise the Alaap-Taana that has been taught. All attention is collected only after completing the syllabus in the colleges and universities. Under such circumstances, the idea of many restrictions of Ragas, the study of same-natured Ragas, the practice of obsolete Ragas, the practice of Rhythms and

Layakaris, and voice culture, etc. are becoming limited only to the examinations, that overlooks the musical presentation. There is no miracle happening to this art-form; neither hold of proper technique is followed nor depth of knowledge. It can be said to be taught and memorised incomplete music theory.

CONCLUSION

The form of Indian music is much broad. There are many aspects of Indian music education. If the vastness of Indian music is to be understood even a bit, then it is important to study in depth all these fundamental elements of music education system. This has been our musical tradition. But in the present time, all areas of life are changing rapidly. It is a big challenge for the music seeker to fulfil the time and hard work that is required to study the fundamental elements of Indian music education. In the universities, the theoretical aspect of music is more emphasized on teaching and learning. But techniques, art, and education, including the theoretical aspects of music education, is not studied seriously. It will not be possible to complete the form of Indian music education without these aspects.

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