

IMPORTANCE OF RIYAZ AND ITS FORMS

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Abstract

Riyaz has a greater importance in a classical music learner's or a classical music professional's life. Without Riyaz one cannot excel in their musical career. Only after hours together of rigorous practise, that too on a daily basis, one can get desired results. Even our music maestros of yester years could redefine the boundaries of classical music only through Riyaz. Riyaz stretches your musical talent and also gives a wider perception to the subject. We may broadly classify Riyaz into 2 forms. One is external Riyaz and another one internal Riyaz. External Riyaz is the training or practise which is done externally or in other words external Riyaz is the actual physical practise, whereas on the other hand, internal Riyaz is done through the thought process. Both are very important for the proper understanding of the Classical Music subject. This article intends to put forth the nature of these two forms of Riyaz. This article also aims to explain the importance of both these types of Riyaz and try to understand their relationship by drawing a comparison between them. This article is confined only to Riyaz in Hindustani classical vocal music.

Keywords: Sangeet, Hindustani classical music, Riyaz, Khyal.

INTRODUCTION

“Geetam, Vadyam, Tatha Nrityam Trayam Sangeetam Uchyate” meaning music is the culmination of all three art forms namely: Geet, Vadya and Nritya. To excel in any of these art forms, one needs to do constant Riyaz. Riyaz is indispensable in a musician's life. Riyaz is the corruption of the word Riyajat, which means perseverance, study, effort, and learning. Riyaz is an “Urdu term for systematic practise of music, dance, or any other art form. In simple terms, Riyaz means training, practise, rehearsal, etc. using a prescribed procedure usually under the guidance of a teacher or preceptor” [1]. Often people refer Riyaz to ‘practise’. But the meaning of the term Riyaz is much wider, and the meaning is beyond the word practise. In Carnatic music Riyaz is often known as ‘Sadhakam’ or ‘Sadhana’. So, Riyaz is doing Sadhana. Though Riyaz is a word associated with classical music, but we see its association with many other forms of music. Riyaz requires discipline, dedication, commitment for years. Sadanand Naimpalli says “It is unthinkable for any individual to assume that he can master the art in a matter of four to five years. Getting a grip on the medium needs as much, or in some cases, even more assiduous Riyaaz than one would put in one's academic pursuit” [2]. Only if you do Riyaz like a ritual you can get command over the subject. There are different ways of doing Riyaz at different times throughout the day and night. A popular type of Riyaz called Chilla, involves practising 10 to 12 hours daily for 40 days continuously without break. Patience and concentration are of utmost importance in Riyaz. Riyaz is must to sharpen your skills in classical music. Earlier Riyaz used to be done in-front of the Guru and along with Guru in Gurukul system. But due to inception of institutionalised learning, it's no longer possible for everyone to do the Riyaz in-front of the Guru. They do the Riyaz based on the tips or techniques as taught by the Guru.

Riyaz is a sacred space where the doer connects himself with the music. It is not just an activity but a whole process involving rigorous and repetitive exercises to master the subject. Having said that, it is not merely a mechanical repetition of techniques, but also intelligent, creative way to build the skills. You are self-observed in the Riyaz. Riyaz is an every-day process.

IMPORTANCE OF RIYAZ IN VOCAL MUSIC

Riyaz is deeply rooted in the rich heritage of Indian classical music. It is the essential and dedicated practise for mastering the art of music. “Riyaz means doing practise in a systematic way to learn Indian Classical Music” [3]. Only when Riyaz is done in a systematic way, it gives the strength to sing or play the instrument for a longer period of time without fatigue or tiredness. So, ‘it is evident that as Riyaz is discussed in connection with music, the destiny of the former gets tied up with the career of the latter’ [4]. Riyaz is a



transformative process, where it brings the doer closer to the essence of the art. It is like lifeblood of musical art.

In vocal music, one must understand the positions of the notes to sing them correctly. In instrumental music like Sitar, Flute, Harmonium etc. the performer or the learner can see the note positions which are fixed in the instrument and adjust the finger position accordingly to play the desired note or Raag. But the kind of privilege instrumentalists have in the instrumental music, classical music vocalist doesn't have it. They must experience the notes within, to get the positions right during execution in a practical way. One must have a strong visualisation of notes in his mind to sing the notes correctly. This visualisation of the notes in an internal process. Without understanding the positions of the notes, one cannot attempt any form of classical music. Therefore, Bhimsen Joshi used to say "Taal Gaya To Baal Gaya, Sur Gaya To Sir Gaya" meaning going offbeat is like losing your hair, but going off-note is like losing your head.

In Hindustani classical music, the creativity plays an important role. One is required to expand the Raag with his creativity through Alaaps and Taans. The classical music performer expresses his emotions with the help of the notes. Therefore, the singer must have a clear understanding of the notes to be creative in his performance. The Alaaps and Taans in various forms of Hindustani classical music are done instantly by imagination. The Raag performance in these forms of music is like a then and there process. The exercises which are practised in the Riyaz sessions many a times are quite different from what is performed on the stage. Or Riyaz may also be a replica of the intended performance. Therefore, unlike performance, Riyaz may not be creative. It is a set of things which need to be done repetitively and also the rehearsal of the things which are intended to be presented. Riyaz is not only confined to classical music but also to other forms of music. Like in Bollywood, playback singers do Riyaz to strengthen their vocal cords. For a classical musician, the day starts normally with Riyaz session in the morning time especially during 'Brahma Muhurta' i.e. between 3.30 AM to 5.30 AM. Though the pattern of Riyaz varies from Guru to Guru or from Gharana to Gharana, the principles or commitment remain the same. Riyaz also helps to adapt various ornamentations like Khatka, Murki, Meend etc. in their performances.

RIYAZ IN GURUKUL SYSTEM

Different Gharanas adopt different Riyaz techniques. In Gurukul system of learning, the student used to live with the Guru, and he was not exposed to other styles, so it was easy for him to understand the techniques involved in the Riyaz with help of the Guru. He used to adopt the singing style as it is learnt from the Guru. It was easier for him to maintain the Gharana system. But now due to the inception of institutionalised learning, it is difficult to maintain the Gharana tradition. In an institution there may be more than one Guru belonging to different Gharanas handling the same subject. So, the learner is exposed to many Gharana styles, because of which it becomes difficult for the student to confine himself to one Gharana. Especially with the social media advent, it has become even more challenging to maintain the Gharana tradition. One or the other way the student is exposed to a singing style which is unlike what is learnt from the Guru. So, doing Riyaz in the presence of the Guru, becomes very important to maintain the Gharana tradition.

COMPARATIVE STUDY OF FORMS OF RIYAZ IN CLASSICAL MUSIC

There are different techniques involved in the Riyaz. Talent and knowledge, both plays an important role in classical music learning process. Talent is the ability to sing well with melody and knowledge is the understanding of the notes to adapt them into your Raag performance.

The Riyaz can be broadly classified into 2 parts, external Riyaz and internal Riyaz. External Riyaz involves practical application of the vocal exercises. It involves physical aspects of learning. It is the actual doing. Internal Riyaz is the process of understanding music. It is the process of picturing the notes in your mind and heart. It's the process of understanding the emotive content of each note and likewise the relationship





between them. The true depth of the art can be achieved only through internal Riyaz. Internal Riyaz and external Riyaz requires the doer to get connected with the self. Though both the types of Riyaz are meditative in nature, internal Riyaz requires more concentration to get connected with your internal-self and music. It involves visualisation of notes. Without internal Riyaz, external Riyaz cannot be in place. External Riyaz is physical in nature where Internal Riyaz is completely an internal process. Both together helps the performer to gain the expertise. Both these forms of Riyaz are vital for an artist's holistic development. While external Riyaz is visible, internal is deeply personal.

Unlike other forms of music like film music or light music singing, where the talent and aesthetic sense only is of prime importance, classical music requires much more than that. It requires the singer to understand the Raag, its aesthetic content, the Swara application and many more things. A classical musician with his musical understanding, can attempt wide range of forms of music. For example, a classical musician can attempt a film song, but a Bollywood play back singer may not be able to perform a Raag because the classical music is completely creative process and knowledge based. That is why Riyaz becomes inevitable in the classical learning process. Because, the Raag cannot be presented without having a better understanding of its nature.

In Hindustani classical music, the external and internal process go parallelly. They cannot be separated with each other. There cannot be external or practical classical music performance without internal process. Internal Riyaz is the mental and emotional engagement with the art of music. It is the process of ruminating into the depth of music. It involves meditation, introspection and in-depth understanding about the underlying principles of the subject. It is the about building a connection between mind, body, and soul.

One need to have musical ear to understand the relationship between the notes. As all the Swaras are the musical sounds, one needs to understand their aesthetic sense, its emotive content. The process involves imagination. To have a strong imagination the process of internal thought process or the internal Riyaz is absolutely necessary. Only with a strong imagination or a clear picture of the notes, the performer can practically demonstrate them in his performances. The very basis of the Hindustani classical music is dependent on the imagination. The improvisation or the Raag Kalpana or exploration, expansion in different popular forms of Hindustani classical music like Dhrupad, Khyal, Thumri, Tarana etc. is completely based on imagination.

The light music songs or film songs are created with a fixed tune. It takes great amount of effort on the part of music director to create a beautiful tune which soothes the mind and heart. Even more difficult is the performance of the different forms of Hindustani classical music as tunes or the phrases of notes are formed with the performer's creativity then and there. The performer is also bound by the rules of the Raag. He is not expected to compromise with the rules of the Raag, especially in the pure forms of Hindustani classical musical like Dhrupad, Khyal, Tarana etc. To execute these forms of music, it's very important to have a strong imagination which can be achieved through internal Riyaz. The thought process is the internal Riyaz and the execution of the same in a practical way is the external Riyaz.

Like a painter imagines the painting and then executes it, same way in the classical musical performances, the performer imagines the work and then executes. The ultimate output i.e., the performance depends upon his imagination strength. If the imagination is weak, the performance will be weak. Because of which we have seen in many cases that classical music learners who are good in their talent and weak in their imagination, fail to become a full-fledged classical performer. They confine themselves to become a light music performer in the long run.





CONCLUSION

With so many developments happening in the world, few things don't change. So is the Riyaz. The Riyaz gives a sense of confidence. It is an everyday process. Though there are different techniques of Riyaz, every technique has its own importance. Riyaz is the part and parcel of a music worshipper's life. Above study helps us to understand the importance of Riyaz and its forms. It is proven that both the forms of Riyaz i.e., external Riyaz and internal Riyaz are inevitable for a classical musician to excel in his career. By embracing both these forms of Riyaz, an artist can unlock his potential of the musical art and embark on a path of continuous growth. A balanced approach to internal and external form of Riyaz helps us to develop technical skills while gaining a deeper understanding of the musical art and its emotional resonance. The thought process which happens in the internal Riyaz, is pre-requisite for practical performance. We can't separate internal Riyaz and external Riyaz. The thought process and the exact execution go hand in hand together. Many say that artists are born. It may be true, but the same born artist must go through rigorous practise and proper guidance which is called Riyaz.

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