

**Indian Classical Music**  
**Its Tradition and Importance of Institutional Education.**  
*Swarnamoy Chakraborty, Research Scholar, Amravati*

**Abstract:**

The classical music of Indian Subcontinent has a rich history of thousands of years. But its exact origin can not be authentically traced. Historians of Indian classical music maintain that this music has evolved from the cultural practices of people of antiquity, who used to depend on hunting and, later, agriculture for subsistence and survival. Our ancestral original artist of music in those eras of the remote legendary past used to experience communion with nature and from their communing with various harmonic sounds of surrounding natural, such as the sweet twitting of birds, the rustle of leaves, the ripples of rivers and streams, they devised musical notes and compositions. Nature played the role of guide and structure for them. They extracted harmonics from the wealth of sound of nature.

The noted musicologist Carl Beaken observed, "Music was created for collective form of labor". Another distinguished historian of music, Carl Buscher held that music had its origin in the most primitive appeal of the rhythm of our bodies. We can relate these comments to the activities of the most primitive hunting communities who used to articulate meaningless sounds with strong accent while doing things collectively. Those sounds of collective merriment or passionate outbursts were limited to one or two notes. Music during its early, primitive stage derived also from the use of hunting tools---such as bow and arrow. The arrow shot from a tight bow produced a wave of twanging sounds which came to be called, at a later Vedic era, *Vana*, which is the embryonic form of the stringed instrument *Veena*. The guitar-like twang of bow and arrow was then refined into seven notes to be played with seven-stringed musical instrument *Veena*. There was a time when any stringed instrument was named *Veena* and the nomenclature of various instruments of this type was determined by the number of strings (One, two or more) used in *Veena*. Primitive hunting communities are credited with another device of animal skin covered on an earth hole designed to announce an emergency and alert and summon all people to deal collectively with the challenging situations. This device is considered to be the legendary ancestor of drums and all other percussion instruments mentioned in ancient sources and Texts of classical music comprise *Dunduvi, Damaru, Moddu, Dhumki, Dhukkoli, Dounti, Pataha, Viswak, Angik, Araja, Mardal, Pushkar* etc. and the instruments of modern times such as '*Pakhowaj*'. *Mridanga, Tabla-baya, Dholak, Srikhol* etc.

Some scholars of Indian classical music were of the opinion that Indian classical music in its rudimentary stage, took its inspiration and example from the crooning of birds. The brief calls of some birds were thought to correspond to one note, the prolonged calls of crows to two notes and even more prolonged calls of peacock to three notes and the calls of mongoose to half notes. Following this principle of rudimentary musical notes one note, two notes and three notes were conceived, the concepts leading to the *Udatta, Anudatta, Swarita* notes of *Samasong* and even later, to the formulation of seven notes and twenty two microtones.

The chronology of Indian classical Music has been divided into numerous phases such as Pre-Vedic era, Vedic era, *Gandharva* era, Buddhist era, Medieval or Muslim era, *Moghul* era and Modern era (dating from the nineteenth century). The Vedic era (Spanning 1,500 B.C. to 500 B.C) witnessed the evolution of *Samagan* ('*Samon*' means singing) which is musical rendition of the text of *Samaveda*. Of four Vedic texts, only the *mantras* of *Sama Veda* were set to music and sung. The musical compositions of *Samagan* bear some structural and melodic affinities with the present-day ragas. The excavated findings of carved musical instruments, the seven-hole flutes and bronze sculptures of dancing figures at the archaeological sites of *Mohenjodaro* and *Harappa* (2,500 B.C-1,500 B.C) indicate the love for music among the people of pre-Vedic Indus valley civilizations and the ancientness of Indian classical music stretching further beyond the era of *Vedas*. The *Vedic* era overlaps with a smaller sub-division of historical period---known as *Gandharva* period. The maestros of *Gandharva* (a racial or ethnic group) used to monitor the movement and tempo of music counting with their fingers and measuring the precise units of beat and number of talas. With this principle applied strictly to musical notes and beats. *Gandharva* variety of classical music emerged as the earliest scientific notation of music. *Gandharva* period was succeeded by the Buddhist period. 'The

Buddhist era (dating from 400 B.C) produced *Jatakas*, and account of the *Buddhas* lives prior to the present one. *Jatakas* contain reference of songs rendered on occasions of worship and temple services. Later, a new variety known as *Prabandha* son developed during Post Vedic eras. *Prabandha* song was the model where from the dhrupad variety of music evolved.

Broadly speaking, Indian classical music can be *categorized* into two forms Religious and Secular. The *Swamagan*, *Prabandha* songs. Songs of Buddhist period fall under the category of religious music while the secular form made use of certain vital elements of *Prabandha* song (such as its beats or *talas*) and *dhrupad*. The secular tradition of classical music consists of two trends---aristocratic and folk or mass oriented, the latter sung on secular, festive occasions and day to-day activities. The next era---Muslim period envisaged a massive change in the form and content of Indian classical music. What Muslim culture contributed to Indian classical music is a new variety of music called *Kaol*(the progenitor of modern-day *Kaurali*), which is the hymn of the virtues of Prophet Mohammad. The illustrious court singer during Alauddin Khilji, Amir Khosru synthesized dhrupad and *khayal* and thus was born a new distinct school and style *khayal*. In course of time, other musical varieties *dhama*, *tarana*, *thumri* and *tappa* also blossomed and flourished gradually. One remarkable change that took place during Muslim era was that the concert platform shifted from places of worship to royal courts, earlier religious music thus transformed into secular, court music. Court music later received its patronage from *Zamindars* on Land lords and, with the decline of landlord or *Zamindar* system, its nourishment from people of community as a whole.

The era that followed that of Amir Khosru was regarded as *Sringar* era, that coincided with the Moghul period. A great patron of music, himself an artist of *nakkara* instrument and composer of poems in Hindi, was Emperor Akbar, whose court was graced by as many as 36 musicians, the greatest among them being Tansen. Another important patron, contemporary of Emperor Akbar was Raja Mansingh Tomor (1486-1518), who wrote and compiled with the assistance of musicologists, a book on classical music entitled '*Mankutahal*'. He founded a school to learn *dhrupad* in the name of his wife Mriganayasi Devi. Under Emperor Jahangir's patronage, the renowned scholar *Somnath* wrote two books *Raga Bibodha* and *Sangeet Daspan* and the legendary singers such as Bilas Khan and Sattar Khan, the sons of Tansen, performed to the delight of dignitaries and elite members of the royal court Ahobal, a great scholar who lived in times of Emperor Shahjahan, wrote of book '*Sangeet Parijat*'. Aurangzeb, successor of Shahjahan, was allegedly hostile to music. But he too was credited with compositions published under a pseudonym. The last Moghul Emperor, Nawaz Wajed Ali was also well-known for his ardent devotion to and sincere patronage for, classical music.

The modern period began with the monumental contribution of Pandit Bishnunarayan Bhatkhande (1860-1936) who devised, out of 72 South India *thaat* (raga groups), ten major *thaats* raga groups, on the basis of *bilawal thaat* and hence came to be regarded as the father of North Indian classical music.

Indian classical music can satisfy at a profound level the need and longings of human soul and mind that keeps changing from dawn through dusk to night, because the melodies of *ragas* have been created in consonance with the valid moods of different hours of a day.

*Ragas* reflect and correspond to the calm mood of the morning, the tired mood of dark and the serenity of moonlit night. *Ragas* are altered also to various seasons. A sensitive mind, stressed under the pressure and tension of practical life, can find a source of comfort, solace and tranquility in classical music. One can cite an incident mentioned by Pandit Ravi Sankar, who was giving an account of the impact of Ustad Alauddin Khan's *Sarod* recital at an evening in London. Although the recital was held at an evening, Alauddin Khan played a morning *raga* and the audience did not miss or fail to respond to the content and mood of morning raga. When asked how they felt, some of them said it was like the flow of Thames at the early hours of day-break, and others said that the music sounded like the musical notes of birds chirping in the morning. Thus Indian Classical Music is rooted in the temporal realities---seasons, hours of a day---of our life. Another feature of Indian classical music is its possibilities, amidst fixed rates and strict discipline of improvisation, variation and novelty. Unlike Tagore songs, whose format or structure has been unchangeably laid out, and unlike Western symphony whose pattern is not to be changed in the least and which must remain limited within the scheme of 12 notes of major Indian classical music by contrast allows an artiste in spite of allegiance to the fundamental notes of a *raga*, to improvise, vary and add new patterns to the traditional melodic structure. Thus it is an art form that can incorporate the old and the new precedent

and diversity, tradition and variety. Appreciation and practice of Indian Classical music ennoble our mind, lifting us away from the humdrum, paltry degrading actualities of life. It exalts our mind as well as widens our mental horizon, carries us way above the narrow bounds of religious, racial and social prejudices. It is a unique medium to foster catholicity of mind and soul and form inter-religion, inter-cultural, inter-communal understanding, harmony and fraternity. It can play a vital role in our self-culture and self-refinement. When Ravi Shankar and Ali Akbar Khan studied with Ustad Alauddin Khan, the mentor and disciples definitely experienced a realm of purity, innocence, magnanimity and sublimity. That was not for a single fraction of a second, blemished by questions of racial and religious differences and barriers. This could be a lesson for all of us who look forward to humane world immune from all racial, religious and cultural intolerances and animosities.

### Conclusion:

- 1) Such an invaluable and unique art form should be included in our national curriculum of all state-sponsored educational institutions because it can exert a salubrious impact on learners and practitioners by refining their taste, humanizing their mind and enlarging their vision.
- 2) Since the old tradition of mentor and disciple can not be adopted and followed by present-day learners of overwhelming size and numbers, classical music should be taught, as other major and core courses for, degrees done at schools, colleges and universities.
- 3) Education without culture and fine arts is an incomplete pursuit. Without the transmission and development of the arts, a nation can not attain a well-rounded development. With these cultural issues in mind, we should stress the urgent need of including Indian Classical music in our national curriculum as integral parts of mainstream education.

### Reference

1. Cultrate and comprehensive History of Indian Music-vol.1:-*Swami Prajhanananda*
- 1) Dr. Prakash Mahadik, Tantri vadyon ki vadan shaili, first edition 2001
- 2) Pt. Bhutnaath De, origin of music, samakalika sangeetham, A.D. Mahadevan, 2012
- 3) Kailash Pankaj Shrivastav, Sangeet vadyon ki utpati tathavikas, nibandh Sangeet, Laxminarayan Garg, Sangeet Karyalaya hathras, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition 2003
- 4) [www.parrkar.org](http://www.parrkar.org)
- 5) [www.swarganga.org](http://www.swarganga.org)