

Hindustani Classical Music in the light of Upanishads

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'Music' as an element what we call today has really no authenticity of its origin or source since the human civilization. It took shape according to various geographical conditions and different mass culture. Variety of music which we see, hear and find today are all the fruits/results of respective languages, cultures, social ways, climate conditions and day-to-day happenings of people all around the world. Historians and researchers had stated that music came from nature. To put it in simple words, 'music' is like water..... which forms as per circumstances. Hence, it will not be wrong to state that music is a part of nature which cannot be derived scientifically with a logical mind or formula....it comes straight from the lap of nature and gradually falls in the shape of the nature and moods of human beings and their respective civilizations. Imagine the time of early man from the Stone Age when expressions through sounds or body gestures, interjectional cry.....these sounds and gestures from time to time refined, transformed into a form names 'music' comprised of 'Swaras' (notes) and 'Laya" (tempo/rhythm). The art form of music did not exist then. As a result of enormous sacred practices, Indian thinkers, Seers, Rishis and Scholars had experienced the sound and path of music which denotes that primordial source of Indian Music Art is a miracle of 'Nada-Brahman' and named as 'Omkar' dhvani. It is timeless and universal. Reasonably, music especially Indian music is not inferred to any particular person or country but it comes straight from heart. Dr. Arun Apte wrote - "The Omkar is beginning of music and this very reason music has been a universal language".

India, a country in South Asian continent has a multilingual and multi-ethnic society. Hindustani Classical Music was identified around the 12th century which places more emphasis on exploring all aspects of a Raaga. After the 16th century, the singing and playing style diversified into different gharanas which were supported in different princely courts. Around the year 1900, Pandit Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande consolidated the musical structures of Hindustani Classical

Music of raagas into a few 'Thaats' based on their notes. Sage Bharatmuni's 'Natyashastra' depicts raaga literally as colour or mood. It also asserts that entertainment is a desired effect of performing arts but not the primary goal. The primary goal is to transport the individual/practitioner and the audience into another parallel reality, full of wonder, into a higher consciousness level. Here lies the Upanishadic aspect of Hindustani Classical Music.

"The essence of the knowledge of the Vedas was called by the name of Vedanta, which comprises the Upanishads...Strength, strength is what Upanishad speaks to me from every page...Therein lies strength enough to invigorate the whole world...They will call with trumpet voice upon the weak, the miserable and the downtrodden of all races, all creeds and all sects to stand on their feet and be free. Freedom, physical freedom, mental freedom and spiritual freedom are the watchwords of Upanishads...The Upanishads are Bible of India".

- Swami Vivekananda

Freedom, liberation, strength and reality are the keywords of the Upanishads which a soul aims to reach from suffering and bondage. 'Swaras'(notes) in several raagas of Hindustani Classical Music when performed or played in an instrument or sung, with its particular combination of swaras creates an atmosphere different from the present situation and place. It takes the practitioner to a separate world of a higher consciousness-----higher reality and at the same time carries the audience into a different state. The sound vibration created by a certain swaras of a particular raaga continuously with resonance of sound waves forms an environment of complete harmony-----a synchronized state of mind, body and soul-----which the Upanishads actually speak.

Discussing about the light of Upanishads in Hindustani Classical Music, it will be apt to explain the Upanishads and its core essence. The word 'Upanishad' has been derived from the root Sadto which are added two prefixes; Upa and Ni.

The prefix Upa denotes nearness or closeness and Ni means totality. The roots Sad means to loosen, to break and to annihilate. So, the grammatical meaning of the words Upanishad is the Knowledge or Vidya which, when received from a

competent teacher loosens totally the bondage of the world --- ---- surely enables the students realize the Aatman or the Higher Self-----completely destroys ignorance. Its secret name is 'Satyasya satyam', 'the Truth of truth'.

The Vedas are basic scriptures and their highest authority in all matters pertaining to religion and philosophy. They are called 'Sruti' (derived from Sru dhatu in Sanskrit)-----To here, since they are handed down from teacher to disciple. It is stated in the Puranas that Maharshi Vyasa was commanded by Brahma to make a compilation of the Vedas.

Vyasa was also the author of Mahabharata of which the Bhagavad Gita forms a part. The Bhagavad Gita is also considered as Upanishad as it contains the teachings of Sri Krishna to Arjuna. Maharshi Vyasa, with the help of his four disciples arranged the Vedas in four books, namely the Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda and Atharvaveda. The mantras are also called the Samhita which literally means a collection of hymns or mantras used in the sacrifices. The Brahmana contains the rules and regulations for the sacrifices and also reveals the meaning of the mantras. Both the Mantra and Brahmana were considered as important mediums of worship during the Vedic period. The full life period of an Indo-Aryan was divided into four stages namely, Brahmacharya, Garhasthya, Vanaprastha and Sanyasa. Each of the Vedas namely the Rigveda, Samaveda, Yajurveda and Atharvaveda contains its own Brahmanas which may also be termed as 'Sutras' or 'Rules'. Mentioned before the final stage of a man during the Vedic age was called 'Sanyasa'. During this period, having totally renounce the world, he became a Sanyasin or a wandering monk. The Upanishads served as a guiding force to those who voluntarily left the worldly attachments and proceeded towards a path of ultimate reality. The forest-dwellers practiced contemplation according to the 'Aryanyaka'-----the Sanskrit meaning of 'Aranya' is forest as it was named. Hence, the sanyasin was guided by the wisdom of the Upanishads. Among the Brahmanas or the rules and regulations of the Vedas, the concluding portion of the Aranyaka is the Upanishad ----- also called the Vedanta because in it the Vedic wisdom reaches its peak or the top. It shows the way to liberation and the highest good.

Hindustani Classical Music has various Raagas which are tunes named according to a specific combination of Swaras(notes). Performing of singing the particular

Swaras of a raaga takes the individual to a world of a meditative state, devoid of sufferings-----to a state of Ultimate Bliss exactly what the Upanishads derives. Though, the raagas of Hindustani Classical Music cannot be expressed in a written language, it can only be felt when performed or played in an instrument or sung in vocal form. For example; Raagas with combination of komal swaras like Bhairav, Tori, Bhatiyaar, Lalit, Maalkauns, Durbari-Kanhara and many more with the resonance, vibration of the use of the swaras creates a frequency unknown to the sense organs and a world of superconsciousness. In various forms if Hindustani Classical Music like Dhrupad, Dhamaar, Kheyal-----the Dhrupad form came from singing verses for the praise and worship of God. The word 'Dhrupad' came from 'Dhruva' and 'Pada' which clearly expresses the songs or the poetry sung in the glory of the Lord. Moreover, Hindustani Classical Music is also named as 'Maargiya- sangeet' which means a path of music or an art performed for the higher purpose of human life and birth. Though the various raagas of Hindustani Classical Music are classified to perform in particular time of an entire day, yet, all the swara combinations of the raagas create an ecstasy on its own which

becomes unique. Apart from the swaras of a raaga, the rhythm or the Taalas used while demonstrating a particular form of Hindustani Classical Music along with Pakhawaj, Tabla or Mridangam forms a completeness of the absolute which is very similar to the Upanishads.

To quote the lines of Shukla Yajurveda: -

पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात्पूर्णमुदच्यते ।
पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते
शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः

Meaning ---- 'what is visible is the infinite. What is invisible is also the infinite. Out of the infinite being the finite remains. Peace is my heart, peace with each other, peace in the cosmos'.

Concludingly, the ray and light of the Upanishads which shows the infinite, the limit, the completeness of a human soul is very distinctively found in the path of Hindustani Classical Music. It depends solely on the practitioner or performer and also the listener whether to consider Hindustani Classical Music as a medium of pleasure or entertainment or a temporary piece of joy----- or try to reach the state of ultimate truth far away from the world and reach a state of bliss if honestly tried for the same. Hindustani Classical Music is no doubt an art form which starts from the complete and ends to the complete which makes it Absolute it all aspects.

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