



Evolution of Indian Music

Historical Development

The development of Indian music can be explained by the Indo-European theory that states that there were certain successful cultures which had spread throughout the whole of Europe and parts of Asia. No one can exactly pinpoint their origins but some believe that they originated from Eurasia. One of these cultural groups is the Indo-Aryan group which has had a significant role in Indian language, culture and music. It was this group of people who brought with them the Vedas and other classical texts of ancient India.

Evidence for the Indo-European Theory

- ❖ Indian music was similar to Greek music in that it was also based on 7 modes (scales) in the early centuries B.C. The Indian scales also followed the same process of modulation (murchana) that was present in ancient Greek music. Since Greece is also Indo-European, this is one evidence for this theory.
- ❖ The second evidence is the link between Indian music and Sanskrit which was the language in which the earliest texts were written. There is also a general belief that classical music is derived from the Samaveda.

Important texts in Indian music

- ❖ Bharata's "Natyashastra" (circa 200 B.C.) states that there were 7 shuddha jhatis (pure modes) and 11 mixed jhatis (modal forms produced by complex modulation).
- ❖ The "Brihaddeshi" by Matanga (circa 700 A.D.) has the first mention of the word "raag".
- ❖ The "Sangeet Ratnakar" by Sharangdev comprises of extensive commentaries about the numerous musical styles that existed at that time.

Important Indian Musicians

The turning point in Indian music was the invasion of the Moghuls. Before the Moghul period, during the Vedic and Aryan periods, the Indian music was based on Samaveda. Once the Moghuls invaded India, music in India was greatly influenced by Persian (Muslim) music.

One such Persian poet and philosopher was Amir Khusro (Bhatkhande 1934). He invented the Sitar, Tabla and numerous musical forms such as the Kheyal, Thumri and Tappa which developed only many centuries after his death. Amir Khusro was a strong Persian influence in Indian music and this influence was felt to a greater degree in north India than in south India.

Hence, this led to the division of Indian music into two distinct systems, the Hindustani Sangeet of the north and the Carnatic Sangeet of the south. Both systems are fundamentally similar but different in nomenclature as well as performance practice. The south Indian music (Carnatic) was not influenced by any other music.

Another great musician was Tansen. He symbolizes the maturity of North Indian music as a distinct entity from South Indian music.

Sadarang and Adarang were 2 other musicians contributed to the birth of many musical forms such as Dadra, Kheyal and Thumri in the 18th century.

In the early 20th century, the concept of north Indian music was revolutionized by V. N. Bhatkhande and V. D. Paluskar. Both of them contributed to the development and popularization of a modern musical notation. In particular, Paluskar was responsible for the introduction of the first musical colleges whereas Bhatkhande introduced an organized system in music that reflects the present performance practice.

Mythological Development

Classical arts in India comprises of vocal music, instrumental music

And dance, which combine to reach an emotional satisfaction as in all art forms. According to the mythological origins of Indian music, the ancient scriptures describe nine fundamental emotions from which are born all other complex emotions. These principal emotions are known as Nava Rasas (the nine moods) and form the aesthetic foundation for Sangeet.

They are as follows: ~

- ❖ Shringar : Love
- ❖ Hasya : Comic
- ❖ Karuna : Sadness
- ❖ Raudra : Furious
- ❖ Veera : Heroic
- ❖ Bhayanak : Terrible
- ❖ Vibhats : Disgusting
- ❖ Adbhuta : Wonderment
- ❖ Shanta : Peace

The acoustic vehicle to convey these emotions is the raag. It was customary to anthropomorphize the raag in the form of gandharvas (demigods) and apsaras (celestial nymphs). Thus, music was considered to have divine quality by the Indians. This quality is best seen in the Nad Siddha, which is the ability to perform miracles by singing or playing certain raags. Tansen was often said to be able to create fire by singing raag “Dipak” or create rain by singing raag “Megh Malhar”.