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A journey of Indian classical music

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Abstract
The music of India includes multiple varieties of folk music, pop, and Indian classical music. India's classical music tradition, including Hindustani music and Carnatic, has a history spanning millennia and developed over several eras. Music in India began as an integral part of socio-religious life. In this paper we are presenting, a short note of Indian classical music.

Keywords: journey, Indian, classical music

Introduction

Indian classical music is the art music of the Indian subcontinent. The origins of Indian classical music can be found in the Vedas, which are the oldest scriptures in the Hindu tradition dating back to 1500 BCE. The Samaveda was derived from the Rigveda so that its hymns could be sung as Samagana. These hymns were sung by Udgatar priests at sacrifices in which the Soma ritual drink, clarified and mixed with milk and other ingredients, was offered in libation to various deities. This chanting style evolved into jatis and eventually into ragas. Indian classical music has also been significantly influenced by, or syncretised with, Indian folk music. Bharat's Natyashastra was the first treatise laying down fundamental principles of dance, music, and drama. Indian classical music is both elaborate and expressive. Like Western classical music, it divides the octave into 12 semitones of which the 8 basic notes are, in ascending tonal order, Sa Re Ga Ma Pa Dha Ni Sa for Hindustani music and Sa Ri Ga Ma Pa Dha Ni Sa for Carnatic music, similar to Western music's Do Re Mi Fa So La Ti Do. However, Indian music uses just-intonation tuning, unlike most modern Western classical music, which uses the equal-temperament tuning system. Also, unlike modern Western classical music, Indian classical music places great emphasis on improvisation. Indian classical music is monophonic in nature and based on a single melody line, which is played over a fixed drone. The performance is based melodically on particular ragas and rhythmically on talas. Because of the focus on exploring the raga, performances have traditionally been solo endeavours, but duets are gaining in popularity. Hindustani music is mainly found in North India. Khyal and Dhrupad are its two main forms, but there are several other classical and semi-classical forms. There is an amount of foreign influences in Hindustani music in terms of the instruments, style of presentation, and ragas such as Hijaz Bhairav, Bhairavi, Bahar, and Yaman. Also, as is the case with Carnatic music, Hindustani music has assimilated various folk tunes. For example, ragas such as Kafi and Jaijaiwanti are based on folk tunes. Players of the tabla, a type of drum, usually keep the rhythm, an indicator of time in Hindustani music. Another common instrument is the stringed tanpura, which is played at a steady tone (a drone) throughout the performance of the raga, and which provides both a point of reference for the musician and a background against which the music stands out. The task of playing the tanpura traditionally falls to a student of the soloist. Other instruments for accompaniment include the sarangi and the harmonium. The performance usually begins with a slow elaboration of the raga, known as alap. This may be very short (less than a minute) or up to 30 minutes depending on the preference of the musician. In vocal music, the alap is followed by a bandish, generally accompanied by the tabla, around which the raga is improvised. In the case of instrumental music, the alaap could be followed by a more rhythmical piece known as "jod" in which the artist provides rhythm with no rhythmic cycle, and subsequently a piece in fast tempo called ""jhala". The counterpart of the bandish in instrumental music is known as the "gat". The bandish or gat is initially sung or played in slow tempo known as "vilambit laya" to be followed by medium tempo known as "madhya laya" which in turn may be followed by a composition in fast tempo known as "drut gat". Carnatic music, from South India, tends to be more rhythmically intensive and structured than Hindustani music. Examples of this are the logical classification of ragas into melakarthas, and the use of fixed compositions similar to Western classical music. Carnatic raga elaborations are generally much faster in tempo and shorter than their equivalents in Hindustani music. In addition, accompanists have a much larger role in Carnatic concerts than in Hindustani concerts. Today's typical concert structure was put in place by the vocalist Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar. The opening piece is called a varnam, and is a warm-up for the musicians. A devotion and a request for a blessing follows, then a series of interchanges between ragams

(unmetered melody) and thaalams (the ornamentation, equivalent to the jor). This is intermixed with hymns called krithis. The pallavi or theme from the raga then follows. Carnatic pieces also have notated lyrical poems that are reproduced as such, possibly with embellishments and treatments according to the performer's ideology. Primary themes include worship, descriptions of temples, philosophy, and nayaka-nayika (Sanskrit "hero-heroine") themes. Tyagaraja (1759–1847), Muthuswami Dikshitar (1776–1827) and Syama Sastri (1762–1827) are known as the Trinity of Carnatic music, while Purandara Dasa (1480–1564) is considered the father of Carnatic music. Indian music is traditionally taught via oral methods and, until the 20th century, did not employ notations as the primary media of instruction, understanding, or transmission. The rules of Indian music and compositions themselves are taught from a guru to a shishya, in person. Various Indian music schools follow notations and classifications (see melakarta and thaat); these are generally based on a notation system created by Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande. A raga, in Indian classical music, is a melodic structure with fixed notes and a set of rules depicting a certain mood conveyed by a performer. It is often a matter of debate among music therapists around the world as to what really makes a raga system for its emotional and as a consequence, its therapeutic value, which makes it stand taller before its other counterparts elsewhere. The Indian classical music tradition recognises historic musicians whose contributions may be legendary: Tansen, court musician of the Mughal Emperor Akbar, Baiju Bawra, court musician of Man Singh I, Amir Khusrow, often credited with the creation of the khyal and tarana, and Sadarang, court musician of Muhammad Shah and another possible creator of the khyal. In Carnatic, Purandaradasa and Tyagaraja are historically well known composers. Modern Carnatic vocalists include Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar, Chembai Vaidyanatha Bhagavathar, D. K. Pattammal, G. N. Balasubramaniam, M. Balamuralikrishna, M. S. Subbalakshmi, Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer. In Hindustani, Modern dhrupad singers include the Dagar Brothers and Gundecha Brothers. Reputed khyal vocalists include Abdul Karim Khan, Abdul Wahid Khan, Amir Khan, Ashwini Bhide Deshpande, Bade Ghulam Ali Khan, Basavaraj Rajguru, Bhimsen Joshi, D. V. Paluskar, Faiyaz Khan, Gangubai Hangal, Hirabai Barodekar, Kesarbai Kerkar, Kishori Amonkar, Kumar Gandharva, Malini Rajurkar, Mallikarjun Mansur, Mogubai Kurdikar, Nazakat and Salamat Ali Khan, Nivruttibua Sarnaik, Omkarnath Thakur, Prabha Atre, Rajan-Sajan Mishra, Rashid Khan, Roshan Ara Begum, Sharafat Hussein Khan, Shruti Sadolikar Katkar, Ulhas Kashalkar and Vasantrao Deshpande. Allauddin Khan was a versatile instrumentalist. He trained his son and sarod player Ali Akbar Khan, his daughter and surbahar player Annapurna Devi, sitarists Nikhil Banerjee and Ravi Shankar, the flautist Pannalal Ghosh, and the violinist V. G. Jog. Younger-generation sitar players include Chandrakant Sardeshmukh, Budhaditya Mukherjee and Shahid Parvez. Among the list of younger-generation flautists are Vijay Raghav Rao and Hariprasad Chaurasia. The name Bismillah Khan is synonymous with that of the shehnai. Zia Mohiuddin Dagar and Asad Ali Khan were known for their proficiency with the Rudra veena. Lalmani Misra revived Vichitra Veena along with creating Misrabani – a tantrakari style suited to string instruments. Alla Rakha made the tabla popular in the West with Ravi Shankar. His son Zakir Hussain is also a well-known tabla player. Among the southern classical musicians, U. Srinivas is known for his introduction of the mandolin to Carnatic classical music. Other well established Carnatic instrumentalists are Lalgudi Jayaraman, the late Kunnakudi Vaidyanathan, T.N. Krishnan, L. Subramaniam, M.S. Gopalakrishnan, and the duo of Dr. Mysore Manjunath and Mysore Nagaraj, Kumaresh and Ganesh, all known for their violin performances.

The Comfort Levels in Musical Frequencies

Indian classical music tradition offers the flexibility of choosing a comfortable frequency for the tonic scale called Shadja [2]. Since the pitch scale is the very basis for the raga system, it is very essential. Thus any singer or a vocalist can determine his or her own comfort levels in rendering the musical frequencies- tones, semi-tones etc- to choose even before a work out for a song or a kriti. Once a singer or vocalist finds his or her comfort levels, while rendering a song, then automatically the audience too gets synchronized to such a comfort state!

The Amount of Notes in an Octave

George Bernard Shaw had once remarked that music needs to get rid of temperament to be fully enjoyed. The Indian classical system, unlike its western counterpart, does not believe in writing down the well-defined notes or swaras and thus regulating the musical ‘reach’ for its connoisseurs. Since the times of the musical genius, J.S. Bach, the West is wrapped up with the concept that 12 notes is an octave are more than enough for enjoying a musical piece, with its various possibilities such as permutation or combination.

This is in contrast to the age-old understanding in India that music exists as a pyshoacoustical phenomenon, especially in the context of so-called Just Intonation (JI). The long traditions of Nada Yoga have injected this concept deeper into the psyche of Indian musicians as well! Though the Indian system approaches towards an octave (called saptak), being formed by seven major “expressive” intervals (swaras or notes), it is the power of expression as clothed in the selected note that comes handy to focus in evolving a raga scale, in tune with the human psyche. Not only that. The dire need of expression as well as appreciation – as craved by any performer of music- has also been taken into this formulation. The long period of development of Indian music (which is estimated to be over five millennia) has thus given birth to a unique scale, based on a large number of basic microtonal intervals (called shrutis), i.e smaller, standard intervals. Thus the system helps in choosing any of the shrutis which supports the interval. It is interesting that there has been various opinions about the number of such shrutis, though in recent years, it is broadly agreed upon as 22 (if not 53 or 66). However, there still exists a debate over these numbers and the exact ratio of the shruti intervals supporting each swara. In brief, due to the number of additional frequencies as available through shruti possibilities, Indian music can be enjoyed almost twice or even upto 6 times fuller than what is possible with a system of 12 equal divisions of the octave (12EDO) – as in the West [3].

Probabilistic Considerations in Pitch Stability

Due to its very structural form, an Indian raga accommodates five note possibilities: vadi, samvadi, anuvadi, alpvadi and vivadi, all of which contribute variously towards evolving the

uniqueness found in a raga. It has been argued that this classification of five characteristics in notes merits probabilistic considerations in the sense that a note belonging to the first three groups is likely to have a relatively high probability compared to a note of the fourth group, which has a small probability. From entropy considerations, a note with a small probability, however, has a corresponding, high surprise elements. Since entropy actually measures the surprise element in a message (in this case, the realization of a note), it is possible to distinguish ragas based on note duration and this could be an answer as to how the ragas of the same thaat evoke contrasting emotions in the minds of its listeners [3].

Non-word Repetition or Aalaap in Indian Raga Music

Aalaap or aalaapana, a musical practice of expanding the musical horizon or space is a time-tested method, known for its therapeutic value [4]. In a recent research paper, it has been noticed that the children with special learning disability (SLD) performed poorly on the non-word repetition task compared to the typically developing children- especially as the length of the now-word increased [6]. It is this author's experience that routine musical training in non-word aalaap will address such deficiency efficiently and improve the performance level of such children significantly. It is also a recent conclusion by the researchers that an oral music segment of only 30 seconds from the aalaap of a raga generally elicit a specific emotion and that the elicited emotion from different segments from the same raga has strong specificity [7].

Voice-Centred Raga Music Culture

Indian music is human voice-centred. Human voice is an extraordinary phenomenon. It is capable of conveying not only complex thoughts, which are dehors any human linguistic expression, but also a medium for communicating elaborate and subtle human emotion, aspiration and will. That's how human voice has been used in many a shamanic practices around the world and also in the age-old practices of nada yoga in India. As the raga music is an off-shoot of the later, the system is also evidently evolved with this nada background. In classical singing raining, one of the goals has been developing a voice quality for singers. A recent study proved that singing power ratio (SPR) increased as the number of years of training. [8].

Phonological Awareness (PA) and Verbal Working Memory (VWM)

Phonological experience (PA) is known to be linked to the development of reading abilities of children. A recent experiment [9] indicates that children receiving Carnatic classical musical training were in advantage for phonological awareness (PA) and verbal working memory (VWM) along with enhanced pitch perception abilities. It was also found that the children who had undergone longer duration of training showed better performance in these areas. It is inferred from this experiment that musical training may enhance the reading abilities and memory function in growing children.

Enhanced Auditory Selective Attention (EASA), Reduced Auditory Fatigability (RAF) and Improved Speech-in-Noise Perception (SNP) in Musically Trained.

A recent research with musically trained has further reported the larger MOCB (Medial Olivocochlear Bundle) activity in both the ears, in case of musicians than in non-musicians. Though the perceptual implication of this finding is yet to be determined, in all probability, they might include enhanced auditory selective attention (EASA), reduced auditory fatigability (RAF) and improved speech-in-noise perception (SNP) in musically trained people.

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