
Music and Religion : As Reflected in the Unpublished Text

Ānandasañjīvana.

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In all ages music plays an important role in the practice of religion. At the early stage of human civilization, humankind worshipped various supernatural entities and tried to please them with the help of various musical and dancing activities. That was the beginning of a long journey of inter-relations between religion and arts or rather performing arts. The Pharaonic rites seen on the tombs of many Pharaohs and noblemen included music. In other religions such as Judaism and Christianity, people used music as an integral part of their worship and religious celebrations. A lot of music was composed to complement religion, and many composers derived inspirations from their own religion. Many forms of religious music emerged in order to fit religious purposes. Christian church music and temple music in the east underwent the same kind of religious influence. Religious music often changes to fit with the requirement of the times. In ancient Vedic civilization, chanting music was practised praising various nature-gods like – Agni, Indra, Vāyu, Soma, Viśvāmitra, Vyāsa and many others. Verses from *Sāma* Veda were used to sing applying a set of simple melody during various religious performances. During the following era a distinct inter-relation between musical performance and religious as well as spiritual thinking established in almost every human civilization. In Purānic age in India, sometimes music was considered as dignified and pure as ‘Brahma’, the eternal spirit of life. Goddess Sarasvati is recognized as the deity of learning and music. Due to that reason, she was frequently worshipped by the composers of *Purānas*, musical treatises and literary texts. All these facts clearly reflect the delicate fabrics woven between musical and religious activities throughout the ages. Later in the 14th chapter of the 4th volume of *Bṛhaddharma Purāna*, Devarśi Nārada is found describing ‘music’ as similar with lord Vishnu by saying – “*Gānanca Brahma*”. Not only that, he also says that ‘music’ and ‘Vishnu’ both are derived out of Brahma or parts of Brahma, the eternal entity. Since 14th century in various musicological texts and *Purānas* the ‘*Dhyāna Rupa*’ of

Rāga-Rāginis was incorporated. Among these the description of few *Rāgas* resembles the descriptions of Hindu religious deities. Specially, *Rāga Bhairava* is considered as the lord Shiva. It is seen that, the description of *Rāga Bhairava* is just similar with the description of Lord Shiva. This indicates that, the principal melody of Indian music is religious and it enlightened through spirituality in all ages.

In the field of textual musicology, an interesting feature is seen in the tradition of composing texts on various subjects including music. Especially the authors who were staunch followers of Hinduism used to praise their Gods in the beginning part of their texts. A large number of texts written on music, dance and other performing arts bear this tradition. Among musical texts of ancient period – *Nāṭyaśāstra* of Bharata, *Bṛhaddeśi* of Matanga, *Sangitaratnākara* of Śārangadeva are remarkable.

In the first two lines of *Nāṭyaśāstra*, the author Bharata praises lord Śiva by saying that –

Pranamyā śirasā devau pitāmahamaheśvarau.

*Nāṭyaśāstrang prabakṣyāmi brahmanā yadudāhritam.*ⁱⁱ

That means, I am composing the text *Nāṭyaśāstra* worshipping the lord Shiva. This *Nāṭyaśāstra* is narrated by Lord Brahma. In the 7th verse of the beginning part, while explaining the origin of *Nāṭyaśāstra* Bharata said that, one should attentively listen to the creation of *Nāṭyaśāstra* by Lord Brahmā. There is of course a controversy about the existence of Brahmā. Some scholars are of the pinion that, this Brahmā is an ancient musicologist, not the lord Brahmā. However the verse is given below –

Bhavadbhiḥ śucibhirbhutvā tathāhavahitamānasaiḥ.

*Śruyatām nāṭyavedasya sambhavo brahmanirmitaḥ.*ⁱⁱ

Then in the tenth verse of the same portion Brahmā is again mentioned as Pitāmaha along with the name of Indra. Here Indra and other deities are requesting Brahmā to create a pleasing thing which is at the same time audible and visible. The verse is as follows –

Jambudvipe samākrānte lokapāla pratisthite.

Mahendra pramukhairdevairuktah kila pitāmahah .ⁱⁱⁱ

In the 13th verse of the beginning part of *Nātyasāstra* it is said that, Brahmā gives a word to Indra and other deities and memorizes the four Vedas in meditation –

Evamatsviti tānuktvā devarājam visrjya ca.

Sasmāra caturo vedān yogmāsthāya tattvavit.^{iv}

In verse no 16 it is said that, god (Brahmā) after making a promise, memorized the four Vedas and created *Nātyaveda* from Vedas and *Angas* (*Upa Vedas*) -

Evam samkalpya bhagavān sarvavedānanusmaran.

Nātyavedam tataścakre caturvedāngasambhabam.^v

Again in verse no 17 and 18, the author writes that, the God has collected texts from *Rg* Veda, musical part from *Sāma* Veda, acting (*Abhinaya*) and sentiments (*Rasas*) from *Yajurveda* and *Atharva* Veda respectively. In this way *Nātya Veda* has been created by Lord Brahma with the help of Vedas and *Upa Vedas*-

Jagrāha Pāthyamṛgvedāt sāmabhyo gitameva ca.

Yajurvedādabhinayān rasānārthavanādapi.

Vedopavedaih sambaddho nātyavedo mahātmanā.

Evam bhagabato sṛsto brahmanā sarvavedinā.^{vi}

Bṛhaddesi was the most valuable survey text on Indian musicology available during 5th-7th century A.D. In section II of beginning part of the text *Bṛhaddesi*, the author Matanga has emphasized on the importance of *Nāda* (musical sound) by giving an illustrated definition of it. In this definition he has put the names of major Hindu Gods and Goddesses to denote that, the *Nāda* is equally dignified with these deities.^{vii} Matanga describes that, ‘Brahmā is known to be the form of *Nāda* (*Nāda-Rupa*), Janārdana (Vishnu) is of the form of *Nāda*, *Parā Śakti* is of the form of *Nāda* and Mahesvara is of the form of *Nāda*. The verse is as follows –

Nādarupah smṛto brahmā nādarupo janārdanah.

Nādarupā parā saktirnādarupo mahesvarah.^{viii}

In the very beginning of his text *Sangitaratnākara*, Śārangadeva praised lord Siva by saying –

Brahmagranthijamārutānugatinā cittena hṛṇpankaje

Surināmanuranjakah srutipadam yohayam svayam rājate.

Yasmād grā mavibhāgavarnaracanāhalamkārajātīkramo

Vande nādatanum tamuddhurajagadgitam mude sankaram. (Verse -1)

That means, who has occupied his place in the heart of wise persons, giving pleasure to hears by following the speed of air originated from *Brahmagranthi*, classes of *Svara Grāmas*, *Varna*-compositions, ornate, *Jāti* and music of the universe is originated from whom – I praise that Siva manifested as *Nāda* (musical sound).^{ix}

In the 11th verse of the beginning chapter, in *Padārthasamgraha Prakarana*, Śārangadeva has mentioned the name of Devi Sarasvati, the Goddess of learning –

Nānāsthānesu sambhrāntā parisrāntā sarasvati.

Sahavāsapriyā sasvadvīrāmyati tadālaye.

that means, after visiting many places Devi Sarasvati is taking rest in Śārangadeva’s residence.^x

In the 25th verse of the same chapter, song (*Gita*) is considered among the three components of *Sangita*, these are – *Gita*, *Nṛtya* and *Vādyā* (or singing, dancing and playing of instruments). And Pitāmaha Brahmā collected this song (*Gita*) from *Sāma* Veda.^{xi}The name of Brahmā is mentioned here for the first time. The verse is as follows –

Ato Gitam Pradhānatvādtrādāvabhidiyate.

Sāmavedādidam gitam samjagrāha pitāmahah.

Few scholars suggest this sent, as Virinci Brahmā and not the celestial God.^{xii}

The 14th century Maithili scholar Jyotirisvara ends his text *Varnaratnākara* by paying homage to the lord Visnu and Siva –

Oum namo nārāyanāya.

Oum bhairabākhyasivalingāya namah.^{xiii}

In the beginning verse of 14th century text *Sangita Makaranda*, the author Nārada praises lord Siva by saying –

Pranamya sirasā devam sankaram lokasankaram.

Sangitasāstram sangṭhya vakse lokamanoharam.

Then in the next verse the author has described the importance of music by associating it with the names of Hindu Gods and holy bodies –

Brahmā tāladharo harisca patahi vinākarā bhārati

Vamsajnou sasibhaskarou srutidharāh siddhāpsarah kinnarāh.

Nandibhṅgirtādimardaladharāh sangitako nāradah

Sambhornṭtakarasya mangalatanornātyam sadā pātu nah.^{xiv}

In the 16th century, few important musical treatises were composed by scholars following the earlier tradition. *Sangita Dāmodara* of Shubhankara is one such notable work. At the outset of his work Subhankara is seen to offer praise to lord Ganesa as ‘*Namo Ganesāya.*’

In another medieval text *Sangita Pārijata*, lord Visnu is praised in the beginning part by saying that –

Visnunāmāni punyāni susvarairanvitāni cet.

Bhavanti sāmātulyāni kirtitāni manisibhih.^{xv}

That means, the name of Visnu is as precious as the *Sāma* Veda.

In the very beginning of the 16th century text *Rāgavibodha*, the author Somanātha has stated his writing by worshipping the lord Siva as ‘*Śivābhyām Namah.*’ In the beginning verse of this text the author has praised Rama, the great hero of the Hindu epic *Rāmāyana*.

Daksine laksmāno yasya bāme tu janakātmajā.

Purato marutiryasya tam vande raghunandanam.^{xvi}

The text *Ānandasāñjīvana* is an early work on Indian musicology as it is known so far. The text is written in Sanskrit language. The typical features of text-composing and musical elements found in it clearly exhibit that, the text is composed in medieval India. Certain technical problems and unavoidable questions come up quite inevitably with the discovery of such an age-old unpublished work. One of these major problems is lack of strong evidences helping in recognizing the author. Varieties of thoughts and opinions, disagreement and controversies are there regarding the author’s identity. It is necessary to make serious attempt for unfolding the mystery hidden in the text existing in discoloured palm leaves. In case of manuscript editing researchers collect data from a number of direct and indirect sources. In the present case, the available manuscript copies of Madanapāla’s works stand as the primary source materials. Besides these *Descriptive Catalogues*, *Catalogous Catalogorum* along with secondary source materials, such as – reference books mentioning the present work as well as carrying relevant information about the author and his works are duly counted. Four

manuscript copies of the text *Ānandasañjīvana* have been discovered till date. Among them, one copy is preserved in the Asiatic Society, Kolkata. The authorship of the manuscript is being recognized by the editors in the introductory note of *Descriptive Catalogue of the Sanskrit Manuscripts*. To quote from the introduction –

“..... another work of royal authorship is the *Ānandasañjīvana* of *Mahārājādhirāja Madanapāla* who had a number of *Virudas* or epithets.”^{xvii}

Descriptive Catalogue is also seen introducing the author brilliantly while quoting the colophon part of *Ānandasañjīvana*. In this colophon, certain specific epithets are applied to the author, like- *Mahārājādhirāja*, *Kaṭṭāramalla*, *Paṇḍitapārijāta* and so on-

“ *Iti mahārājādhirājapaṇḍitapārijātakaṭṭāramallarāyabibhāta...*

Darājivirājamānasṛmadanapālaviracite ānandasañjīvanābhidhāne saṅgītaśāstre prabandhaparibhāṣāprabandhalakṣanasālagasūḍavāggeyakāralaksanaparīksanastṛtiyodhyāyah.”^{xviii}

Another copy of the manuscript is available in the Sri Venkateswara University, Tirupati (which is a transcribe copy). The third copy is collected from the department of Musicology, IKSUV, Khairagarh (mss. no: 925). The last copy is preserved in the Anup Sanskrit Library, Bikaner (mss no: 3400). *New Catalogous Catalogorum* informs us about the existence of one more copy of the text in the Library of His Highness The Mahārājā of Bikaner (mss no: 1090).

In the seventh line of folio -2 of the text *Ānandasañjīvana*, the author praises Lord Shiva by saying –

‘*Kāsisivasivosvāpi vārāhatirthe*’.

Elsewhere, in the 8th line of the 3rd folio, lord Shiva is again worshiped as Devādideva –

‘*Devādītiryakcaramam saririnām ātmāsamah...*’

In the 4th line of the 4th folio of the same text Lord Siva is praised as Sankara. The respective line is as follows –

‘*Giyamanam param gitam devāh sankarapurvakāh.*’

The specific religious identity of the author is recognized through this system of worshiping God in the beginning of the book. Interestingly, this system is particularly seen in the writings of the Hindu authors only. On the other hand, the texts written by the contemporary Buddhists, Jains and Muslim authors are not following this style. Here lies the specialty of the authorship belongs to a particular religion. This fact stands as a strong supporting evidence of inter-relation between music and religion in the field of textual musicology In India.

ENDNOTES:

ⁱ *Nāṭyaśāstra of Bharata*, Ed. and translated by Dr. Sureshchandra Bandyopadhyaya and Chhanda Chakraborty, Navapatra Prakashan, Kolkata, 1980, pp. 1-3

ⁱⁱ *Ibid*, pp. 2

ⁱⁱⁱ *Ibid*

^{iv} *Ibid*, pp. 3

^v *Ibid*

^{vi} *Nāṭyaśāstra of Bharata*, Ed. and translated by Dr. Sureshchandra Bandyopadhyaya and Chhanda Chakraborty, Navapatra Prakashan, Kolkata, 1980, pp. 3

^{vii} *Bṛhaddesi of Matanga Muni*, Ed. and translated by Prem Lata Sharma, Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, New Delhi and Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Pvt. Ltd., Delhi, 1992, pp. 6-7

^{viii} *Nāṭyaśāstra of Bharata*, Ed. by M. Rāmakṛṣṇa Kavi and J.S. Pande in 4 volumes, Geakwad’s Oriental Series, Baroda 1926, 1934, 1954, 1964, pp. 1-3

^{ix} *Sangitaratnākara of Śārangadeva*, Translated into English with detailed notes by Dr. C. Kunhan Raja, The Adyar Library, 1945, pp. 1.

Note

Here in his translated edition Dr. C. Kunhan Raja translated the above verse and has incorporated notes and annotations of it following the two commentaries – ‘*Sudhākara*’ of Simhabhupāla and ‘*Kalānidhi*’ of Kallinātha. His notes can be cited here for the sake of detailed study.

Verse -1. Worship for happiness that Sankara, the embodiment of sound, sung about by the entire world, who shines by himself in the heart-lotus of the wise, giving delight to their ears through the mind that follows the breath arising out of the *Brahmagranthi*, and from whom villages, wealth, caste, the creations, ornaments, geneses and stages (arise).

Here the commentary of Simhabhupāla is followed in the main work.

^x Dr. C. Kunhan Rājā’s translation and note is given below –

Sarasvati, wandering in various places and being fatigued, ever takes rest in his home delighting in living with (him).

Sarasvati, Goddess of learning.

^{xi} Dr. C. Kunhan Rājā’s translation and note is given below –

Note

Therefore, song, being the principal, is first dealt with here. The creator collected this song from the *Sāma* Veda.

^{xii} *Sangitaratnākara of Śārangadeva*, Ed. and translated in Bengali by Dr. Pradip Kumar Ghosh, West Bengal State Music Academy, Kolkata, 1994, pp. 5

^{xiii} *Varna-ratnākara of Jyotirisvara thākura*, Ed. by Mahārājādhirāja Sir Kāmeshwar Sing, Baptist Mission Press, Calcutta, 1940, pp. 70

^{xiv} *Sangita-Makaranda of Narada*, Ed. by Mangesh Ramakrishna Telang, Central Library, Baroda, 1920, pp. 1

^{xv} *Samgita Pārijata of Ahovala Pañḍita*, Ed. & Trans. By Geeta Som, Dipāyan Publishers, Kolkata, 2001(1st ed.), pp. 1

^{xvi} *Ragavibodha of Somanatha with his own commentary Viveka*, Ed. by Pandit S. Subrahmanya Sastri, Adyar Library, 1945, pp. 1

^{xvii} *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Sanskrit Manuscripts*, ed. by Śāstri Hara Prasād, The Asiatic Society, Kolkata, Vol- XIV, 1955 (1st ed.), Introduction, pp. VII.

^{xviii} *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Sanskrit Manuscripts*, ed. by Śāstri Hara Prasād, The Asiatic Society, Kolkata, Vol- XIV, 1955 (1st ed.), Introduction, pp. VII.

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