



Indian Devotional Music: Its Relation with the Religious Concept of People and Iconography

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Abstract

Religion is the driving force behind the evolution of society. Human religious believers have interpreted music as the utterances of gods and lauded it as the purest expression of spirituality. Throughout the majority of human history, religious texts have been sung rather than written, and religious behavior has been expressed through prayer or devotional melodies or music in almost all religious traditions. The values, functions, and genres of religious music are culturally diverse and varied. Religious musical forms can transcend cultural barriers. Some religions, such as Buddhism, use music to prepare the mind for meditation by calming and focusing it. In India, kirtan, also known as Shikh religious music, facilitates connection with one another and with God. Similarly, Vedic hymns in Hinduism were musical. By performing bhajans, devotional songs, Sanskrit mantras, etc. Hindus offer prayers to God. Sufi music, Qawalli, etc., are chanted during prayers in the Muslim faith. In addition, it teaches religious teachings. Religious songs of any faith are characterized as a source of strength and a means of relieving pain, thereby improving one's mood. The iconography of Indian music contains numerous elements that represent the human religion, culture, traditions, and way of life, thinking, values, customs, costumes, rituals, and behavior throughout the centuries through visual art and symbolism like sculpture, architecture, idol of god etc. Therefore, iconography is a specialized discipline of study that examines images of gods. Indian music and dance are the culmination of one of the world's finest civilizations' evolution. The Iconography of Indian music entails the study of figures, images, deities, and pictorial representations of the devotional music's most prominent deities of music.

Keywords

Indian music, devotional music, religion, iconography

Introduction

The History of Music and Early Human-

When humans were in their primitive or early state, they eventually heard various sounds of nature such as animals, rain, wind, etc. and they were very curious about and drawn to the sounds of nature. Due to their enthusiasm, they followed the sound and attempted to speak it themselves. By striking two bamboo and animal bones, they attempted to sense the tone and rhythm. Thus, individuals began to follow diverse sounds. Early humans were afraid of natural disasters, pandemics, fatal diseases, rain, storms, and earthquakes. They believed that a superpower may have been controlling them. To appease the supernatural force, they sacrificed many things and begun to pray to trees and rocks, etc. When praying to these natural objects, they made numerous rhythmic sounds and movements. This is how they developed musical melody, rhythm, and instruments for prayer.

As people became more civilized and began to live in societies, they progressively developed distinct cultures, religions, and music.

Music and Religion

In all known human societies, the emergence of music occurred simultaneously and spontaneously. In ancient India musical instruments were discovered at least 30,000 years ago.

Always associated with deities and goddesses is music. In India, the divine origin of music is attributed to certain gods through the arts. Religion and deity are connected to music not only in India but also in Western cultures. In Greek mythology, instruments are affiliated with Greek gods. In India, Shiva is associated with dance and music, Lord Brahma is frequently associated with the Nada Brahma, and Lord Vishnu wields the Shankha or conch, a wind instrument. In Indian music, the five faces of Lord Shiva gave rise to ragas such as raga Bhairava, raga Hindol, raga Dipak, and raga Shree. Goddess Parvati in Hindu tradition sang the raga Kaushik. The goddess Saraswati is linked to

music. She is observed with a veena in her hand. Lord Srikrishna is depicted with the flute instrument. The Vedic sage Narada is depicted carrying the Tumburu instrument. In addition, he is credited with inventing the Mahati veena.¹ In the Christian churches of medieval Europe, hymns were prominent. In all religions, music is employed as a form of supplication. As a spiritual aid, music is believed to uplift and calm the psyche. The evolution of classical music has been multifaceted and consequential. They have infused it with streams of worship melodies. Jaydev Goswami (12th–13th centuries) was one of India's earliest mystic vocalists in the Vaishnavite Bhakti (tradition of praying lord Vishnu) tradition. His book *Geet Govinda* is considered a devotional music classic. Here, he sang Srikrishna and Radha's devotional melodies with great emotion and sincerity. Chaitanya deva of Bengal also sang about Krishna and Radha's mystical love. Srimanta Sankardeva and Sri Sri Madhabdeva composed numerous Srikrishna-based devotional Borgeet themes. Tansen's teacher, Swami Haridas, was an expert in the dhrupad style of devotional music. In India, the Bhakti movement gave sacred music a boost. Music is sanctified by religion. It is given the standard form while being combined with religion.

In religious ceremonies, dance, music, and instrumental music were integral components. Humans have a natural affinity for music. Since the commencement of recorded history, there have been traces of music. Every caste, religion, and ethnic group has its own culture, music, dance, and beliefs, among other things. In this manner, India possesses remarkable traditions and cultures. In India, people of all religions celebrate every occasion with music. Each religion, including Hinduism, Islam, Sikh, Buddhism, and Jainism, has its own way of commemorating auspicious occasions and festivals with musical notes or prayer songs. Music is a medium utilized by nearly all religions. It is a crucial and potent element that enables devotees to express their beliefs, innermost thoughts, and feelings. When used carefully, music can create an atmosphere conducive to worship. Music can elicit emotion and bring people together. Music plays a vital role in all of our lives. In our private lives, we choose the music we listen to, but we are subjected to music in other contexts. For this reason, music is performed and played at all events in human existence. From childbirth ceremonies, wedding songs, songs of cultivation, prayer songs to relief from diseases like pox and others, Children's songs like riddles or rhymes, folk songs based on love, sadness, separation, songs of

nature, patriotic songs, village songs, festival songs and other ritual songs based on god and goddess, other auspicious songs, etc. are existed in India. Music is an integral component of human existence. It also had to do with our emotional and spiritual health. Performers and listeners accomplish union with their higher power through music.

Hinduism in India has been associated with devotional music since the Vedic period. Regarding the worship of Gods, hymns are significant and are sometimes regarded as sacrosanct. They are often reverent and solemn forms of music containing often sacred lyrics but are intended to elevate the spirit toward God. In christens, church music is also performed as prayers. Muslims perform their daily 'Azan' in a musical melody that somehow resembles the notes of the Indian classical raga.

In India, music is regarded as a living and revitalizing art, with matter for its body and spirit for its essence. Raga, which consists of combinations of notes, microtones, emotions, and moods, can be characterized as the psycho-material body of music.

Indian Music and Iconography

Iconography is derived from the Greek words 'eikon' which means image, and 'graphia' which means writing, drawing, etc. The term "eikon" is equivalent to the Indian word "arca" or "image."² Consequently, the term 'icon' refers to an object of worship, a representation of a god or saint in painting, sculpture, etc. It is connected with sacred rituals involving the worship of particular deities. Iconography is therefore a specialized field of study that examines images of deities. Indian music and dance represent the pinnacle of the evolution of one of the world's greatest civilizations. The Iconography of Indian music also implies the study of figures, images, deities, and pictorial representations of the devotional music preeminent deities of music. The name of paintings that depict music, particularly Indian raga music, are Rajput paintings. Rajput painters who had worked at the Mughal court and learned some of the science of miniature painting as developed in Persia must have returned to their homes and produced such works as the Rasikapriya illustrations. More significant for the future are the earliest Rajput Ragamala paintings, which also date to roughly the Mughal era, as these themes were to dominate the school's output throughout the entire 17th century.³

Songs and dance were inextricably linked to the religious revival that Shri Chaitanya so strongly influenced in the early sixteenth century. As we have seen, music and

poetry have a reciprocal relationship. This collection of musical poems and images is known as Ragamala. Artists depicting dance and music in pictures and sculptures have been discovered in royal places, temples, and Buddhist religious sites. In literature, pictures, sculpture and iconography, dancing has been depicted extensively during various historical eras. In the Indus Valley civilization where dancing girls with bronze sculptures were discovered. The great book *Natyasastra* written by Bharatha in India (Approx-2nd -5th century) is the earliest surviving Sanskrit text of drama, music, and dance. In India's ancient and medieval temples, sculptures of musicians singing, playing musical instruments, and dancing are abundant.⁴

Ancient temple dancing rituals may have influenced ancient sculptors to incorporate dance and music into temple architecture. Although music and sculpture are distinct art forms, they are interconnected in a social, cultural, historical, and religious manner. These two forms evolved religiously and evoked rasas in the minds of the general public. The science of iconography is also closely related to religion or religious cult that teaches one to realize divinity in a man or in an object. Art is an expression or a symbol of nature and it unveils as well as represents the exquisite beauty of nature which in its turn is the representation of world essence. Music has been present from the history of Vedic and Upanishad periods up to the present time. According to Venkateswara, The pre-Vedic Aryanism knew no idol. From the Vedic samhita and Upanishad periods, when priest devote sacrifice in fire, the tendency of anthropomorphic integration towards symbolism regarding the Hindu gods has been developed. Rajput painting is the name of famous art. It has a wider extension. Rajput painters who had worked for a time at the Mughal court and learnt some of the science of miniature painting as developed in Persia. Further Rajput developed Ragamala painting in around the 17th century.⁵ It portrays the states of love or the type of heroism of Rajput kings. Also, it has expressed the sentiment and emotion of ragas imagining various gods and goddesses in human form.

Conclusion

Human is a social animal and to live in society people has to follow many rules, customs, tradition, culture, and religion. For the development of a community or a society, people must have to develop their culture and tradition. Music makes bonding among

people. So it has the power to grow sentiment and emotions among people of a society, community, and religion. That is why many saints of religious faith have used music to spread religion and religious sentiment worldwide. Music is pure art and when it enters religion, it reached the highest purity. Because the standard text, tune, rules, customs, costumes, tala or rhythm, etc. used in devotional music it becomes the standard form filled with various rule and regulations. To preserve religious faith, spread religious faith and make a bonding among people through religion, music is considered as a powerful medium. Music elicits emotions and grows sentiment. To protect every tradition and culture, music must be used as a medium for heart-to-heart connectivity among people of the world. Musical sounds are related to humans from the beginning of an early age and later humans created musical notes from the sounds of nature. The iconography of India has many evidence in relation between music and religion.

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