

## **8. Aesthetic appeal in Indian Melody and Raagas, their Scientific basis and the Rasa theory of Raagas.**

### **The aesthetics of Music;**

The basic one theme of classical Indian Music is to give character to music. **Character, as we may see, has its roots deeply laid in tonal relationship of the notes used and in the melodic progression as extended in the region of rhythm.** A song or a tune is the outward embodiment of music, but the character has its very soul. The process which brings out the full beauty of this soul forms the aesthetics of music.

Let us now see the different aesthetic processes employed in Indian Music and see what justification they may have from the view point of the modern science.

To begin with the drone is tuned to the fundamental of the singer's voice. Then the song is given to its accompaniment. Every classical song has a poetic theme which is normally very simple in nature. Music also does not allow much scope for any special poetic merit as the meaning of the poetic words and phrases are thrown in the background so completely that audience has to content mostly with notes of music and has often to guess the words. This is true not only of Indian Music but of music of the West also. Even then the artists give some consideration to the poetic theme. So when the song is actually sung it is given first to slow or medium time and the whole song is sung once or twice so that the poetic theme may, without difficulty, be grasped by the audience.

When the song is sung, the improvisation or the progression begins. The progression has some well recognized principles to guide it. It is improvisation in the sense that it needs no rigid preparation as that of Western system, in which there are many parts which without common understanding and previous direction may run uncontrolled and entirely spoil the music.

3 Let us now see the demands of the three unities of music on the progression of Indian Music.

**The first requirement of the first unity is about the correct intonation of all the intervals of the scale of the chosen Raaga. The next step is to make the best attempt to preserve the quality of notes employed and make the music as expressive as possible. In case of the vocal music this is done by proper voice training.**

In an 'Aalap' the dominant notes of the Raaga always receive special prominence thereby making their comparison or contrast with the drone, quite distinct. The Aalaps are first very short and always end on the tonic note. Each successive Aalap gradually accommodates more and more syllables and hence accommodates fresh notes in addition and stretches over a greater part of the time measure. The final link in the aalapa ends on the tonic and is followed by fixed link which leads from the tonic to the burden of the song and thus completes the individual cycle of Aalaps.

When the Aalaps are sung, Tanas of regular melodies begin. **The difference between the alapa and the Tana lies in the fact that in the Alapa the salient note of the Raaga receive special prominence, both in magnitude and time where as Tana proceeds by equal steps without preference to any one note.** The progress of Alapa and Tana takes place in four stages. In the first stage the advance is arohi i.e. the ascending steps, in the second by avrohi i.e. the descending steps, in the third by sthayee i.e. the stationary steps, the same note repeating itself and in the fourth by sanchari i.e. the roaming steps.

In the ascent, as we proceed higher, the notes become more and more vigorous and individual in character, where as in descent the case is reverse. Thus the feeling tone or the individual aesthetic value of the notes is different in the two processes. This is also one of the reasons as to why the enharmonic effect is distinctly felt in Indian Music. In Sthayee the progression of the same note is repeated several times over. In Samchari the complete form of motion is repeated, also the harmonic changes do take place. **In short it is not sufficient to know the scale of the Raaga but it is necessary to know further, the different groups of notes, functioning in the Raaga with the proper sequence of ascending, descending, stationery or Samchari form of the motion.**

In Alapa, the Meenda or glide is often employed and it may sometime extend to a full octave or even beyond. In a glide the voice is stressed just when it passes up or down through the pitch of the legitimate notes of the Raaga scales and remain perfectly smooth and gliding for the rest of its journey. Thus there is a general suspension of the notes, except for the moment of the stress and this establishes a sense of tension and creates a longing for an early relief being restored. The relief comes when the moment of stress just arrives or the suspended note finally resolves

into a well defined consonant note of the Raaga scale, usually the aesthetic note and is a very favourite ornament with all the performers.

**Thus every raaga is a special aesthetic scheme having individuality even in its physical form.** So in case of Raagas which are very close to one another, utmost care has to be taken to preserve their individual character intact. This is done by supplementing the Vadi Samvadi arrangement and the melodic specialties or rules of each by proper choice of Alaps and Tanas of their ascending or descending motion and of the use of glides or other Gamakas.

#### **Emotional appeal of Raagas;**

**Raagas and Rasas** – Emotional appeal has been a subject of very close attention even from the very early days. There have been a few who think that music is a passing show or a pass time and nothing to do with inner mechanism of emotion. Whereas there have been others who declare that music can give rise to any and every emotion and can develop it to any degree of intensity. There have been others who would assign this or that emotion to a Raaga as it would please them.

However, the problem of Raaga and their Rasa or their emotional appeal may have much to do with peculiarities of the performer, the listener and the music material i.e. the Raaga or the song itself. But, having chosen the material once, they have to accept the laws and order of the chosen theme as also its limitations.

In music, sound being the medium, both the performer and the listener need to have a clear understanding of its laws and must, from the first day, pay regard to them. The skill of the performer then lies in interpreting these laws in as many beautiful ways as possible and in creating as many beautiful orders and patterns, out of them. Though music offers great scope for personal skill and variety, yet under the veil of this variety, there is always that gracious presence of a unity, the unity based upon the presence of physical laws. In considering the problems of Rasas therefore precedence ought to be given to the laws of harmony over the likes and dislikes of individuals.

**Consonance is the first and the foremost consideration upon which the laws of harmony are based. Music, therefore, employs consonance for pleasant and hence for a bright effect.**

**Dissonance on the other hand is jarring and deals a shock which the ear protests. So music employs dissonance for an unpleasant or dull or sad effect.**

**For the purpose of Indian Music, the degree of the consonance or the dissonance generated by a note is easily determined by simply knowing how the note is related to the tonic harmony of the drone.** The resultant notes of this harmony are the first few harmonic upper partials of the fundamental note which are the most powerful of all. Hence the comparison of a note with tonic harmony of the drone is primarily a comparison with the fundamental note itself.

To determine the character of the note the following two rules are sufficient:

1. The physical appeal of note is pleasant (bright) or unpleasant (dull or jarring) accordingly as a note is consonant or dissonant.
2. The closer the harmonic relationship of the note with the tonic, the greater is the degree of consonance and the further the harmonic relationship, the greater is the degree of dissonance generated by the note.

According to the above principles the following details give the individual character of each note in relation to the tonic note:

1. Absolute consonances: Unison and Octave
2. Perfect consonances: Fifth and Fourth
3. Medial consonances: Major and Minor Third,
4. Imperfect dissonances: Major Second and Sixth
5. Complete dissonances: Major seventh, augmented Fourth, Minor Second

In Indian music the Minor Seventh is usually associated with fifth (or fourth) and then it is a medial consonance. In other cases, it belongs to the class of imperfect dissonance.

The above two rules then determine the individual character of each note. But the Raaga does not employ only one note but necessarily employs a group of at least five to seven notes. What would be the Rasa or the feeling of the Rasa or the feeling tone of the Raaga may seem to remain yet undecided. But as the Raaga system is based on the idea that each Raaga is to give prominence to one particular note in preference to the other and so, it should become the vehicle of what that note stands for. Thus in a Raaga the part played by the Vadi being the most emphatic, survives to the end and maintains its swing and potency all along by pushing the clashing details out of sight by less emphasis, attention or prominence. In choosing a Raaga therefore, its musical theme or better its emotional appeal is chosen as well and the latter is

mainly governed by the character of its Vadi or the dominant note. The Vadi note, therefore, serves as an index, as it were of the kind of appeal a Raaga may put forth.

As there are three types of notes as explained above, the corresponding musical appeal of the respective Vadi notes will also be of three different types. The appeal would put an openly gay and bright character for the consonances, where as for the dissonance it would be openly sad and dull or of depressing character. If the Vadi happen to be of medial consonance, the appeal would neither be very bright nor very dull but would be intermediate between the two and thus would seem rather indefinite in character. Under these circumstances the uncertainty is removed by stressing further either the consonant or dissonant notes from the remaining part of the Raaga scale.

In this manner we can make music as much bright or dull, gay or depressing as we like by choosing the Vadi note in a suitable manner and accordingly impress the ear physically. But such music may not necessarily touch the mind nor move the heart. To do so mind has to be led from purely physical in to aesthetic or emotional regions. To stir the mind, a centre of interest must be created and interest must be further advanced by raising an expectation which when fulfilled offers great relief and makes for joy and pleasure on the other hand, the non fulfilment of an expectation makes one uneasy and sad.

The interest must be created and further advanced by –

1. The poetic theme.
2. Certain actions and expressions as in a dance or by –
3. The power of tones alone.

Drama employs all three together and thus it is a mixed form of art. But in its purest form, each art employs its own medium and does its best in that medium irrespective of others.

The aesthetics of music must, therefore, concern itself with the intelligent use of different musical sounds on their acoustic merits only. This merit or the artistic potentiality of a musical note depends upon the following:

1. The harmonic relationship of the note towards the tonic or the fundamental notes, as also towards other notes of the scale.
2. The individual tonal variations.
3. The individual rhythmic variations.

Thus under the first category, the comparison with the fundamental note discloses the individual character of a note, as their consonance or dissonance and this accordingly puts on a pleasant or unpleasant appeal. Next, the consonance of a note becomes brighter by associating the note with another less consonant note than itself. If, however, the note is associated with another more consonant note than itself, the degree of its consonance is toned down. Similarly a dissonant note when associated with another still more dissonant appears less dissonant and when associated with a note which is less dissonant appears more dissonant by the contrast provided.

To make the contrast bold enough so as to attract the attention of a listener, the note which is intended to receive greater attention is distinctly hinted at, but is deliberately delayed by intervention of a second note which is sustained a little too long. This delay at a critical movement, when a note of some prominence is clearly hinted at, but is purposely avoided, establishes a sense of tension, to which the mind reacts by insisting upon its speedy removal and thereby throws a yet greater preference for the delayed note. This is a very favourite artifice of the Indian singers. **In Indian music if the Raaga is intended to have a bright appeal, the tension is removed by making a graceful return to the dominant note of the Raaga or more generally to the prime notes of the drone.** If, however, the Raaga is meant to make a sad or a pathetic appeal, the tension on account of the delaying note is allowed to remain for a much longer time or as in some cases not at all removed nor does the delaying note necessarily lead to a consonance. This uneasiness, therefore, persists and is further aggravated, thereby making its effect more touching or pathetic.

**The individual character of a note may be further modified by effecting suitable changes in its tonal quality and by subjecting it to rhythmic variations.** With the help of such changes it is possible to create several forms of musical expressions which may accentuate the appeal of the Raaga. Bright and cheerful sounds reminds us of joyful things, harsh and loud sounds of anger or power, sad and subdued tones of sorrow or bereavement or fear and so on. The above experiences are intimately linked up with the changes in the quality of the tone. There are other experiences which are linked up in a similar manner with changes in their rhythmic bearings. Thus steady and sustained notes remind one of steady and peaceful things and a rapidly varying voice of impatience or hasty action.

Thus by judicious choice of tonal and rhythmic forms of expressions the mood of a Raaga can be firmly established and music may truly become a vehicle of

emotional appeal of various degrees of intensity. In Indian music such changes are technically known as Gamakas of which there are a few standard forms, a necessary part of education of every student of the art.

### **The secret of the Melody;**

Music has to do mainly with the emotional appeal and is mainly subjective. The science of music, therefore, properly begins with the emotional quality of particular pitches with reference to a basic note to which the attention is revealed in the minds of the singer and the listener. From the particular pitches the investigation is led on to the groups of pitches called Swaras whose emotional appeal and enjoyability is more tangible than those of mere pitches. Thus it has been definitely discovered that 'Sa' or 'Sadja' which corresponds to 'C' in the European system enriches and induces the emotion known as Vira (राजस्य), Roudra (क्रोध) and Adbhut (व्युत्थ) i.e the 'heroic', the furious and the amazing, that Rishabha or 'Ri' which corresponds to 'D' has an appeal pertaining to what is known as 'Beebhatsa (भयानक)' & 'Bhayanka (हृत्कण्ठ)' or 'disgusting' and 'fearful', that Gandhara or 'Ga' which corresponds to 'E' appeals to what is known as Karuna or sense of 'Pathos', that the Madhyama or 'Ma' and 'Pa' which corresponds to 'F&G' make a special appeal to what is known as 'Sringar' or the 'erotic' and 'hasya' or the 'humorous', 'Pa', 'Dha' & 'Ni' partake of the emotional appeals of 'Sa', 'Ri' and 'Ga'.

### **Degrees of the melody:**

It is a universally accepted fact that the note which is at a distance of dominant and subdominant note, called, Samvadi has the maximum consonant quality. Consonance is very much like blood relationship, the degree of which is measured by the number of steps taken to trace it. Similarly the degree of consonance is measured by the number of steps taken to trace it. That is, starting from 'Sa', its Samvadis are 'Ma' & 'Pa'. These can be called as the Samvadis of the first order. For each of these notes there must be two Samvadis. For the first note i.e 'Ma', the higher 'Sa' itself is one of the Samvadis. The other Samvadi is 'Ni' (B flat). For the second note again, the higher 'Sa' is one of the Samvadis. The other Samvadi is 'Ri' (D). We can, therefore, call 'B flat' and 'D' the Samvadis of the second order in relation to 'C'. In the same way we can find the Samvadis of 'B flat' and 'D'. The new notes we get in the manner will be Samvadis of the third order. If we proceed in this manner we find that we get new notes, up to the eleventh step. Thereafter, if we continue the

process, the same old notes reappear. We have now got 22 pitches which are the seats, so to say of Samvadis of all the orders from 1 to 10. These 22 pitches can thus be used to measure the degrees of melody. These independent pitches, at a minimum distance required for separate existence without beats, are called 22 shrutis. It is a strange coincidence that the 22 pitches that measure the degrees of melody are the self same 22 pitches that have the separate existence without beats in the octave.

We know express the distance between the notes in terms of these shrutis. The distance between 'Sa' & 'Ma' is nine shrutis and that of 'Sa' & 'Pa' is of 13 shrutis. That is to say that the Samvadis of the first order are 9 & 13 shrutis from the note in the question. Those of second order are situated at an interval of 4 or 18 shrutis, the interval of the third order are 5 or 17 shrutis, the fourth 8 or 14 shrutis, the fifth 1 or 21 shrutis, the sixth 10 or 12 shrutis, the seventh 3 or 19 shrutis, the eighth 6 or 16 shrutis, the ninth 7 or 15 shrutis, the 10<sup>th</sup>, 2 or 20 shrutis and the 11<sup>th</sup> are both at 11 shrutis interval.

If we take these Samvadis in order for staying, they will be found to possess less and less melodic quality as we proceed from the first order onwards. The word Samvadis is restricted only to the Samvadis of the first order. The others are called Anuvadis or assonants, till we come to those of the tenth which are called Vivadies or dissonants. These are at an interval of 2 or 20 shrutis. With this unit of measure for measuring the melodic quality of notes at the command of composers and musicians, it is no wonder that Indian music has developed with a variety and a subtlety (nuances) which is not found in as much clarity in the other systems of music.

#### **Applications of the Principle of Samvadi relationship:**

A musical phrase may consist of one or more notes. A phrase with a single note will be melodic only if it is sufficiently elongated with the ebbs and flows and that is generally used as melodic background for emotional situations in the films. Their chief purpose is to enrich the emotional appeal. Phrases of two or three notes are generally constructed for maximum melodic effect with the ending note as the Samvadi of the starting note or of the second note, taking care of course to see that the Anuvadi, that is allowed, is within the first few orders. The familiar Western phrases like CEG & EGC i.e Sa Ga Pa & Ga Pa Sa are instances in point. But in Indian music long intervals between the notes are generally avoided in the musical phrases and it is for this reason, that the prominence is given only to one note in the phrase which is dwelt on with all its life and length and emotional expression with the help, if

necessary, of 'Gamakas' or graces. The other notes in the phrase generally serve the purpose of leading up to it and are generally very near to each other so as to form a smooth curve. In this type it is easily seen that we can't have Samvadis in a phrase of three notes. All that we can do is to avoid Vivadies.

In Indian music we have got only two sets of Vivadies which are recognized as such. They are 'Re' & 'Ga' both of the lowest variety (C sharp & E flat of the Major scale series) and 'Dha' & 'Ni' both of lowest variety (G sharp & B flat). All the other sets of Swaras are excluded from the stigma inspite of the fact that they may be at an interval of 2 or 20 shrutis.

Phrases with 4 or 5 notes can easily contain Samvadis at the beginning and end without leaving off any of the seven notes in the middle and these are very popular in India. The starting note or the ending note determines the emotion and its Samvadi, either before or after, adds life to it and makes it complete. In the phrases of more than five notes the rule is that the note chosen for determining the emotional quality of the phrase, that is to say, the note in which the stay is the longest, must be the one which has its Samvadi present in the series for notes composing the phrase. A corollary from that rule is that one must stay as little as possible in the note which has not got its Samvadi in the phrase itself, follows.