

SOME UNEXPLORED AREAS OF RESEARCH IN INDIAN MUSIC

Suresh Vrat Rai

Advanced study or research in Music is direct offshoot of the institutionalised system of teaching and learning Music. The system has been accepted widely despite its limitations and attack by the conservative school supporting the traditional pattern. The socio economic circumstances particularly of the artist and the students of music have paved the way for popularity of the institutionalised system introduced by Pandit Vishnu Digamber Paluskar, Maula Baksh and others, on account of its intrinsic advantages. Yet its critics continue to be offensive and aggressive. Their approach and arguments need not necessarily be brushed aside summarily, on the contrary critical examination of their view point might reveal creative suggestions for advanced study and research.

The critics feel sore about the majority of the amateur musicians teaching in the Music colleges because an average amateur according to them lacks the professional skill, performance and therefore, suffers from sense of inferiority complex. Even the critics admit that these amateur musicians earn bigger sum than the traditional professional, they are also capable of exploiting other avenues. The modern music institutions divorced from Guru or Ustad have produced "Text Book" music, making the students dependant upon certified music teachers or tutors or badly managed, under staffed and semi starved music colleges for their training in music. One does not feel surprised to find extreme stand taken by the critics.

"We can close down all our music schools without doing any positive harm to the heritage of classical music. Apart from doing general propoganda for music, these schools serve no creative purpose. They neither inherit nor transmit the genius of our music. Their mushroom growth is symptomatic of our organic decay. The music examinations of these colleges turn out graduates and no musicians, giving a stamp of recognition to all successful candidates who go out into life with very poor equipment. They may find jobs and this is one of the main functions of a music institution".¹

1. Indian Music To-day-S.K. Chaube (Page 109,112).

The criticism though apparently biased and guided by blind support to the traditional pattern need not necessarily be dismissed as reactions. Let us accept the challenge with sincere introspection. The criticism is of teaching in various classes, is equally applicable to research and advanced study. Critics of the institutional system appear to have formed the impression that the research work done so far is more academic and theoretical in nature. The vast area of practical performance remains untouched. We can strive to focus our attention on research work having direct bearing on performance and its technique in some way or the other.

Heterogeneous crowd of students with or without talent and aptitude on account of indiscriminate admission of students is a genuine complaint against the institutions of music. Except few institutions e.g. Banaras Hindu University (see Ordinance No. XX Prospectus of Studies, Faculty of Music and Fine Arts) aptitude tests are unknown to the institutions. Such a crowd of students impairs fruitful training of music.¹ Even general aptitude tests can be helpful at the initial stage of admission but advanced study or specialisation in particular style or branch requires more comprehensive aptitude test to determine learning of the student to particular style and his capacity. The aptitude test in itself can be an important field for intensive research, practically untouched so far.

The Notation system is another irritation to the advocates of the traditional oral system of imparting lessons in Music. Notation has been dismissed as inadequate and misleading imitation of the Western music pattern.

“The genius of our music cannot be reduced to any form of notation. Not even the most scientific system of notation can convey the spirit of Ragas and their composition. Such a highly individualistic art as classical music in which personality of the musicians counts a great deal and which abounds in numerous niceties and embellishments cannot be transcribed in notation”.²

The critics are partially correct. The intricate compositions and styles are elusive and too subtle for notation. Moreover, Notation is unfortunately taken as substitute of guru or teacher. It is true, the Infinite “Nada Brahm” having infinite modes of manifestation cannot be restricted within finite

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1. “The result is that musical institutions in this country have no vital common interests, the only common interest being the granting of certificate to dozens (now thousands) of candidates every year. Instead of becoming means, they become an end in themselves. (Indian Music Today, S.K. Chaube, page 112).
 2. Ibid 108.

limits of prediction, enumeration or narration through the symbolic dialect of notation, but the traditional protagonists take extreme sides, rather *ex-parte* view of the technique of recording notes.

"This new musician inherits nothing from the past because trained as he is against the background of text book notation, his style is also of the printed variety".¹

Yet even the sharp critics admit that the notation do give us at least faint idea or vague impression which has to be improved upon considerably.² We have so far been going with the two notation systems in vogue without major changes. It is for the research scholars to exploit immense potentiality of notation, evolve rationalised and uniform notation system to the nearest point of accuracy and permanency. The recording technique can be enriched further.

Turning to the traditional style one hardly finds scope for seeking an answer to 'How' and 'Why' either from the Gharana Ustad or some one else. The natural seed for research and advanced study was nipped in the bud in the name of regard for the Ustad, submission to him. One can find how undaunted faith to the extent of blind faith made the pupil self enclosed and without initiative. He made even defects in the style of his Ustad as part and parcel of his own style and hardly made any effort to improve or further enrich the traditional style. He could not think of research. Faithful reproduction of the style formed rigid frame work. We, therefore, find virtually status quo during the last few decades except combination of two ragas may be *Purvang* or *Uttarang* or pieces of the two ragas into a new one, giving the name of new raga and that too as exceptions based on trial and error method.

The modern institutional system has become more than fifty years old. Yet the teaching continues according to the outdated syllabi and fixed routine. The method of teaching music on scientific lines is yet to attract the Musicologists, research scholars. Dr. Surendra Shanker Awasthi has tried to focus attention on this problem in his work. Prof. S.S. Bodas, while participating in the Seminar at Lucknow in February '77 advocated rational and scientific approach for teaching Music to the Primary, Junior class students. Training in teaching method at various levels corresponding to the respective syllabi is paramount need of our age. The huge project will require work by several research scholars on various aspects, branches and styles for varying grades or classes. Such comprehensive work dealing with the specialised technique of practice, teaching model lesson, supervision, maximum use of the general principles of teaching applicable to music lesson

1. Indian Music To-day, S.K. Chaube, page 110.

2. Ibid page 107.

plan, method of assessment and evaluation, use of modern teaching aids and equipment and other aspects will undoubtedly open a new era for bringing qualitative change in the output.

Research in initial stages moved on the lines of other Humanities departments. Recent research works on music are accordingly characterised by critical, study, analysis, as comparative study of the Sanskrit texts right from the Samveda Samhita, the Puranas to the Natya Shastra, the Vrihaddeshi, the Sangeet Ratnakar and series of works on ancient musicology. We also find interesting epigraphic interpretation. While, recent research unfolds the glorious past of Indian Music, its highly developed and rich tradition, unless such works reflect bearing on the present styles and instruments, the utility appears academic only like similar work by the department of ancient history and culture. Indology Music is essentially a performing art. The area of research having relevance in some way or the other, therefore, appears equally desirable. Apart from research on the ancient texts, various styles in vogue can also be picked up for meaningful work e.g. the origin and development of Dhrupad, Khayal, Tappa and Thumri styles. The concept of Raga, content versus grammar, Tana and Alap in the Indian Music as applicable to Dhrupad, Khayal etc. aesthetics, application of its principles to Music, the ethnomusicological aspects of styles, impact of folk music on classical ragas and their origin, musicality in the folk lore and folk tunes, the semiclassical styles, voice culture, comparative study of Gamak in the two systems e.g. the Karnatak and the Hindustani music, comparative study of ragas in the two systems like Bhupali and Mohanam, Bhimpalasi and Averi, Durga and Shuddha Saveri, which will ultimately pave the way for mutual dialogue between the two systems. It is needless to point out adoption of ragas like Hansdhvani, Charukeshi and other ragas of the Karnatak system. Not mere coverage of the new area, but change in the fundamental approach, practical impact and evidence might make research work really useful. Actual performance, practical field work supported by tape records as evidence should form the basis of research work. Experiments in choral singing and orchestration of Indian music, the concept of Rasa and poetic compositions can also be promising areas for research. In this connection demonstration of the twenty shrutis on the Shruti Veena by Prof. Lalmani in support of his exposition deserves mention. Dr. Shatrughna Shukla has produced comprehensive work of the evolution of Thumri and multicolours of the style. Some of the popular myth and legend in regard to the Ragas like Deepak, Malhar, Kafi, Hindol, specific colours of the seven notes, scientific basis, if any, of the Ragmala paintings are yet to be examined in the light of "Sound theory" advanced by the physicists like Herman Helmholtz, Tyndall, Sedley Taylor. Manufacture and repair of instruments, indispensable for any style has failed to attract the board of studies and research scholars alike. Some of the traditional manufacturers are doing the job without intimate knowledge of sound, its intricacies, structure, shape and material of the instrument, which affect the performance considerably.

The students and musicians knowledge about instruments is theoretical, and limited to historical background. The test of a good instrument is hardly known to most of the musicians. Approach of the manufacturer is commercial emphasising ornamentation than quality of the instruments from the point of performance. We accordingly hardly notice any significant improvement or addition in these instruments. The ancient musicians devoted themselves not merely to performance but its manufacture as well. We know the popular story how Narvahanadutta rejected the veena immediately after the first stroke saying that some particles of cobweb in Tumbi distorted the sound and his criticism proved to be correct.¹ Research on this neglected aspect will certainly enrich the instruments apart from their standardisation and necessary modification according to requirement. Research on instruments from historical point of view will have to rely on references in musical texts, general contemporary literature, careful examination of paintings, sculpture and other fine arts, epigraphic references, folk lore and mythology² for arriving at a conclusion. The realm of research in this regard is practically virgin, but imperative.

The problem of acoustics apparently comes within the purview of physics. Physics has so far been strange and also irrelevant to musicians of the past, but once we are exploiting the latest mechanical devices like use of microphone, recording apparatus, broadcast in the realm of music, research on this side can hardly afford to ignore acoustics any more. It is true that the sound engineers are doing their job but those well versed in music having intimate knowledge of the subtle shades of oscillations, interpretation of articulations microtones, embellishment, accurate sense of pitch, relative, proportion of various instruments in orchestra or accompaniment can do real justice to the job. Similarly an excellent auditorium and its sound arrangement requires deep knowledge of the acoustics of music than superficial architecture. Research in acoustics of music from this point of view can serve as technical guide to the Engineers. Research on vibrations of sound units causing evolution of musical tone, tunes, their colours by the physicist Prof. Wordsworth, Mermann, Helmholtz, M.A. Bijerregward, Chalandus, Wallis, Marloye can serve as signpost for the Indian musicologists.

The very concept of applied music appears strange to the institutions of music. We have to go beyond sole performance with the moving times and exploitation of music in various directions. Background music for drama and films, sound effect, choral singing, orchestral compositions, folk tunes, commercial tunes for advertisement with deep understanding of human psychology, music of folk theatre, music direction, will not merely

1. See Vrihat Katha Shlok Sangraha, Chapter XVI and XVII.

2. Article "Mukhvina" by Dr. B.C. Deva in the Sur Singar Journal, Vol 2, October 1964, No. 2.

widen the scope of music but also provide more alternative job opportunities for the musicians. Some of the stalwarts like Bade Ghulam Ali Khan, Uday Shanker, Ustad Bismillah Khan, Ustad Ali Akbar, Pt. Ravi Shanker have already taken lead. The area of applied music for research appears promising both from academic and practical point of view.

Our materialistic oriented approach confined to the empirical level has obscured vision of the transcendental level. The modern research scholars have perhaps left the real field of research to the saints musicians particularly of the mediaeval period. The highest research should guide transition from the visual and audible phenomenal objective music to the absolute subjective music, the celestial music conceivable through the concentrated spiritual mind. Research from this point of view should underline harmonising the chords of phenomenal music with those of the transcendental music by adequate training and education, which can by itself be an independent subject of research. Research limited to the empirical level so far, might equip the musician with perfect knowledge of microtones, tones, sidetones, alankara, tana, murchanna, understanding of moods and sentiments but the real aim is not mere appreciation of phenomenal music and its structure. It is on the contrary, communion with the inner vibrations of sound which requires metaphysical balance of life. Music is psychomaterial object, research on the technique of cultivating music for appreciation of the ideational and real forms by intuitive artist can guide to the supreme goal. The communion with Nada Brahma requires dynamic approach to the basic concept and definitions, for example the ragas from transcendental point of view are not mere combination of swaras, murchana, alap, Tana and other essentials लक्षण. Positively the ragas are the divine and dynamic Life principle and, therefore, the psycho material approach should transcend to the religio philosophical state. Some of the musicologists suggested Dhyana mantras¹ i.e. contemplative compositions for realising the real and divine form, ragas are accordingly to be viewed as medium to the realisation of the essence that shines behind music. The divine bliss, grasping the inner meaning instead of confining vision to the external appearance. Research beginning with basic definitions, technique and principles should gradually transcend to the Summum Bonnum of all fine arts and life as such, mystic experience of the Nada Brahma, awareness of the Absolute, a state where there is neither music nor musician nor audience but the highest experience alone, the state of pure monism. It is true, there are practical difficulties and limitations particularly within limited scope of the institutions, but research has to be taken in a wider sense. The responsibility of higher research rests on the future musicians and musicologists produced by the institutions. There are still musicians thought very few in number, who can show the way to the highest goal through music. The musicians can start research work

1. See Sangeet Darpanam (Tanjore Edition 1952). Also see Nadmaya and Devtamaya description of Ragas by Pt. Somnath (1609 A.D.)

according to their level. It is true that the higher research work will be fundamentally different from the academic research work, nevertheless beginning can be made to explore the virgin areas of research with note of optimism.