

Aesthetically Inclined Indian Classical Music

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Abstract—Fine arts and the aesthetics have intermingled together. The study of the fine arts is incomplete without the assistance of the aesthetics. Likewise, the concept of aesthetics is inconclusive without an analysis of the fine arts especially, when it comes to the study of art of music. The beauty of music is not associated with only a specific constituent element. It is a combination of the aesthetic aspects of all the constituents that give the whole its beauty.

Deriving from the Greek word for perception (*aisthesis*), and first used in the 18th century by the German philosopher Alexander Baumgarten, the term "aesthetics" (also known as *æsthetics* or *oesthetics*) refers to those principles governing the nature and appreciation of beauty. Academically speaking, aesthetics refers to the branch of philosophy which deals with issues of beauty and artistic taste.

To-day, music lends itself readily to our definition of art. Music is the most signal example of a mode of expression that has attained to a complete and pure aesthetic character, an unmixed beauty. In the beginning primitive men sought to express and communicate themselves through music and sound. These were, first of all, the cries of the human voice, expressive of fear and need and joy—at once direct outpourings of basic emotions and signals to one's fellows, to help, to satisfy, and to sympathize. Then, perhaps by accident, man discovered that he could make sounds in other ways, through materials separate from his body, and so he constructed drums and cymbals and gongs; and by means of these, too, he communicated his needs and stimulated himself to rage and excitement. In doing this he was imitating nature, whose noises, exciting and terrifying, he had long known: the clap of thunder, the whistle of the wind, the roar of the waves, and breaking things etc. Out of unbeautiful noise sprang beautiful music.

Music is the 'Art of the Sounds'. Without sound, there can be no complete music. It blooms through the medium of sound. We say that the cuckoo sings melodiously, but this is not music. It contains the 'Naad', yet it is not music. The bare sounds in nature cannot create music on their own. They have to be arranged /organized in a particular order. Nobody but man can do this organisation. Thus, music can be said to be the 'Art of Humanly Organized Sounds'. When he presents this organised composition of sounds, only then music is created. This principle of 'organised composition of sounds' is valid for vocal as well as instrumental music. The medium of expression in the music is the tones which are called Nada. From Nada, musical notes are formed. Nada itself has been

compared by the God. The concept of Nadabrahma is present in almost all the great Works of Indian music.

In the great Work of Pt. Ahobal, "SangeetParijat", two eminent objectives of music have been mentioned.

- **Music should be entertaining. It should have the capacity of pleasing the masses through various tools and forms attached to it.**
- **At the higher level, it should also have the capacity which can liberate the artist/listener from the worldly problems. It should have the power of "self-liberation". In Indian philosophy, this "self-liberation" has been called as "moksha". "Moksha" or "bhav-Bhanjan" is said to be very important in the four "Purusharthas". These four "purusharthas are as: Dharma, Artha, Kaamand , Moksha.**

One has to attain first three of them in order to get the forth one – "moksha".

The 'Meaning' of Music differs from person-to-person. It largely depends on the way a person perceives it. **We listen to music for two reasons – to get happiness out of it and to understand it.**

It is the very famous saying, "**Beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder**". This applies to the beautiful musical tones too. As the literal meaning of beauty relates to the sense of vision, one may raise the doubts over the beauty of musical tones. But when it comes to the expressive meaning of the word "beauty", its scope seems to have no borders. Whatever gives you the pleasure, satisfaction, relaxation of mind, enjoyment etc. is said to be beautiful. Thus, everything that delights us is beautiful.

However, the term "beautiful" in different Branches of knowledge like philosophy, literature, etc. has different meanings associated to it. Likewise, in the art of music this term has a specific meaning. Hence, the beauty with reference to music also takes different shapes in different sociocultural setups. Here in India, we generally think in terms of our own musical traditions. In fact, the three basic dimensions of the arts in general and the fine arts in specific are:

1. **Place,**
2. **Time**
3. **Circumstances.**

These three aspects change the terminology of any concept let alone the beauty aspects of music. Therefore, while studying the aesthetical values of any

musical composition, let us keep in mind these basic aspects which really make a vital difference. It is due to this fact that newer concepts, trends, systems, practices, habits, etc. keep on emerging from time to time. **The famous poet Bhaas has once said, "The beautiful is that which is ever new".**

This newness of the compositions makes them appealing and beautiful. There are some classics which are liked in the present era too. It is because these classics are beyond the three basic aspects of arts, namely, the time, the place and the circumstances.

Playwrights like Kalidas, Shakespeare etc. were beyond the limitations of place, time and the circumstances. They chose the topics which the masses can still identify themselves with. That is why; their plays still satisfy the readers and viewers aspirations and expectations.

The Western composers like Mozart, Beethoven and Handel as well as the Indian composers like Tyagraja, MuthuswamiDixitar, ShamaShastrietc from the South and Omkarnath Thakur, Pt. Ratanjankar etc. from the North were ahead of their times. They composed very beautiful traditional bandishes which are still being followed by the learners as well as the teachers of the Indian classical music.

Through the above analysis, we can conclude that there is a fundamental relation between the arts and the aesthetics in general and between music and aesthetics specifically. That is the reason Naada is considered to be close to the Almighty God. In our tradition of music, music has been associated in all the religious rites. Not only that, music has been an integral part of our cultural heritage. Thus, music cannot be studied without the study of the aesthetics which provides new dimensions to it.

Keywords—Aesthetics, Classical Music, Fine Arts, Indian Music, Western Music.

Introduction

Generally speaking, fine arts and the aesthetics have intermingled together. The study of the fine arts is incomplete without the assistance of the aesthetics. Likewise, the concept of aesthetics is inconclusive without an analysis of the fine arts.

Traditionally, the aesthetics of music or musical aesthetics concentrated on the quality and study of the beauty and enjoyment of music. Aesthetics is a sub-discipline of philosophy; however, many musicians, music critics, and other non-philosophers have contributed to the aesthetics of music. The origin of this philosophic sub-discipline is sometimes attributed to Baumgarten in the 18th century, quickly followed by Kant. Through their writing, the ancient term 'aesthetics', derives from the Greek "*aisthetikos*" meaning sensory perception, received its present day connotation. In recent decades philosophers have tended to emphasize issues besides beauty and enjoyment.

It is often thought that music has the ability to affect our emotions, intellect, and psychology; it can assuage our loneliness or incite our passions. The philosopher Plato suggests in his book, the Republic that music has a direct effect on the soul. Therefore he proposes that in the ideal regime music should be closely regulated by the state

It is commonly believed that human responses to music are culturally influenced. For example, musical passages in Beethoven that sounded highly dissonant to his contemporaries do not sound dissonant to listeners today. As such, music's aesthetic appeal seems highly dependent upon the culture in which it is practiced. However, there is a physical background which defines sound being proper or improper. Proper sound is perceived as gentle sound while improper sound is more or less considered nice sounding depending on what the listener is used to listening to. Harry Partch and some other musicologists like for instance Kyle Gann therefore have studied and tried to popularize microtonal music and the usage of alternate musical scales. Also many modern composers like Lamonte Young, Rhys Chatham and Glenn Branca paid much attention to a scale called just intonation.

Aesthetics of music include lyricism, harmony, hypnotism, emotiveness, temporal dynamics, resonance, playfulness. However, there has been a strong tendency in the aesthetics of music to emphasize musical structure as the most important aesthetic element that is important in the experience of music. The beauty of music is not associated with only a specific constituent element. It is a combination of the aesthetic aspects of all the constituents that give the whole its beauty. It is, therefore not possible to separate out and examine these aesthetic factors individually.

We listen to music for two reasons –

1. To get happiness out of
2. To understand it.

One essential pre-requisite of music is that it should give bliss. Every time an artiste performs, he is trying to experiment with the knowledge he has. However, people can derive pleasure from this. It is 'Music' only if the artiste's experiment is successful. Simply having the matter is not enough; one should be able to present it in a particular manner. This understanding comes out of training. Taste has to develop over time. The 'swar'[notes] are told to us, and they gradually have an impact on our mind. This happens after several years of cultural training. Culture plays a very important role in this process. It is an inseparable part of music.

In the ancient period, the music was composed in only three swar as: S r S, n S r S, r s n, n S r s. As per anecdotes, this swar-pattern was extended to seven notes by Lord Shankar

The other belief was that Music emerged from of nature. Shadjo Mora haa (out of peacock) Out of this tendency to imitate the animal sounds in nature, (characteristic) the swar came into being. Today's developed music came into being and then the octave (saptak) concept came into being. Later the Pentatonic octave developed into the seven notes that we know of today. These Notes were named Shadja, Rishabh, Gandhar, Madhyam, Pancham, Dhaivat, Nishad. These Swar are related to our feelings and emotions. And where there is a connection with the emotions, there is 'rasa-nishpatti'. And hence there comes their connection with 'saundarya' or aesthetics.

Swar and its Rasa Relation : There exists a Swar-and-Rasa interrelationship. From Shadja and Rishabh, the 'Veer Rasa'(Heroic) , 'Raudra Rasa'(Anger) and 'Adhbhut Rasa'(Wonder) emerge; Gandhaar and Nishaad evoke the 'Karuna rasa' (Mercy, Pity); Madhyam and Pancham give rise to 'Haasya' (Laughter, pleasure) and 'Shringar' Rasa (Make-up); and from Dhaivat, the 'Bibhatsa' (Disgust, Aversion) and 'Bhayanak' rasa (Horror, Terror) are created.

A swar has no independent identity. It is identified always in relation to something. Standing alone, we do not know whether it is Dhaivat or Pancham. It is only with respect to a particular Shadja that you can identify a Dhaivat or Pancham or any other swar in the saptak.

Sa Dha is the cause of a different Rasa-Nishpatti. Thus, for example, we say that Darbari is veer-rasa-pradhan. This means that there is a 'potential' in the swar-sangati of Raga Darbari to evoke the veer rasa in the mind listener. Thus when we think of the aesthetics of music, it is only the combined effect of swar, laya, taal, words, raga and bandish, that creates the beautiful effect. The Raga helps us in rendering various designs out of raw material. The true nature of Raga is 'nirguna' (formless). It is the artist that makes the raga 'sagun' out of'nirgun', i.e. the artist gives it a meaningful form by stringing the Swar together in particular sequence/schemas.

Music and Other Finer Arts

The philosophy of "Satyam Shivam Sundaram" expresses the importance of purity and pleasure in all the fine arts. When we talk of music, nobody can claim to disagree from the fact that it has the capacity to give pleasure even in the adverse conditions like trouble and tensions. That is the reason why music-listening is now recommended to the patients of hypertension, sleeplessness, cardiac diseases etc. music has the potential to diverge the mind from the negative attitude to the positive one and thus to provide relaxation and relief, though only for a shorter period of time. It is this speciality of music which is very important. In other arts, we have to concentrate our minds first in order to appreciate them. On the contrary, as far as the art of music is concerned, as a musical sound is perceived through our ears, our mind is diverted towards the sound itself. We do not have to

make an extra effort in order to appreciate the pleasure inculcated through the perception of amazing and pleasing tones. That is why, music is liked by almost all the men and women of different ages, classes, social backgrounds etc. why the human beings only! It is taken in good taste by animals also.

Music is the expression of one's state of mind through the means of the permutations and the combinations of the interesting and pleasing sound-patterns representing the tones and overtones of musical notes. Thus, it is perceived through our ears. Though on the higher levels, when we listen to the great artists, we make an eye-contact too with the performer. However, this eye-contact hardly affects or influences the pleasure which we receive by listening to the good music. It hardly makes any difference – listen to the music through a radio set [where it is not possible to view the artist], or listen to it through some visual media like the television, video etc. the only condition is that the listener should have the capacity to appreciate music. We are aware that those who are not "Rasika" cannot appreciate any arts. That is why this condition is important. This condition does not mean that most of the persons cannot appreciate the music. This only means that one has to attain certain level of understanding of the art in order to appreciate it. In the field of music, especially, Indian classical music, if one does not know the concept of Ragas, he/she is not able to enjoy it. The same thing can be applied to other arts too.

Therefore, it is very important for the audience of music that they should have the capacity to appreciate the same. This is the reason why the level of appreciation differs from person to person. Some people like a particular piece of music but at the same time some others dislike the same piece. This does not mean in any manner that the piece of music itself is defected but it shows the difference of opinion amongst the masses or the classes.

Sometimes, the question is raised about the popularity of some specific musical compositions. The compositions which seem to be popular sometimes are not liked by even the great artists. This is the reason that the insight as well as the anticipation of the masses is very different from that of the perception and the expectations of the artists. An artist can understand the concept of raga and if the performer deviates from any of the rules of the raga lakshanas given in musicology, he/she would not like it. On the contrary, it is difficult for the general listener to find fault in the concept of the art as they are not aware of it. In the compositions related to the popular music, the situations are different. These compositions are meant for the masses. Therefore, anybody can appreciate and enjoy them. However, in the classical compositions, only those persons can appreciate the music that has a basic knowledge of the Branch. Not only in the field of music but in any of the fine arts, when it comes to the Classical compositions, the rules have to be different from that of the popular piece of work. For example, in

Literature, the "road-side books" are meant for the masses and hence catch more attention than the literary and Classic ones. In music the situation is the same.

Music has therefore many forms. It has many modes of expression. We can find whatever level or standard at our will. We have folk music, regional music, cine-music, popular music [Pop music], classical music, semi-classical music etc. It is for the performer and the listener to decide which form of it they wish to go to. Therefore, let us concentrate upon Indian classical music.

Indian Classical Music and Aesthetics

Indian classical music has a very great and illustrious tradition. It has passed through many ups and downs. It has developed the capacity to survive under the most adverse circumstances. It has the power to submerge music of different regions, kinds and categories. We have seen that in the medieval period of our history, when there was a total cultural invasion, the tradition of Indian music adapted itself in a manner that the chaos could not damage the beautiful and pleasing treasure of the

musical tradition laid down by our great ancestors. History tells that there have been several instances when our tradition of music was tried to be changed and transfigured to the taste of the invaders who have come from different parts of the Asian region and elsewhere. But the power of our music was such that it did not succumb to the pressures and prejudices. It took all the changes in a positive manner and modified itself accordingly. That is why, in the present era too, when there are different streams flowing through our music, we see that the basics are still the same. The medium of expression in the music is the tones which are called Nada. From Nada, musical notes are formed. Nada itself has been compared by the God. The concept of Nadabrahma is present in almost all the great Works of Indian music. This shows that our music was not meant just for fun or the worldly entertainment but it had some higher levels than that. ***In the great Work of Pt. Ahobal, "Sangeet Parijat", two eminent objectives of music have been mentioned.***

Music should be entertaining. It should have the capacity of pleasing the masses through various tools and forms attached to it. At the higher level, it should also have the capacity which can liberate the artist/listener from the worldly problems. It should have the power of "self-liberation". In Indian philosophy, this "self-liberation" has been called as "moksha". "Moksha" or "bhav-Bhanjan" is said to be very important in the ***four "Purusharthas"***. These four "purusharthas" are as under:

1. ***Dharma,***
2. ***Artha,***
3. ***Kaam and***
4. ***Moksha.***

One has to attain first three of them in order to get the fourth one – ***"moksha"***. Through the practice of the tradition of Indian classical music one can attain these Purusharthas very easily. That is why, in Indian philosophy, music has been praised at many instances. I do not wish to go deep into it as it does not come under the present topic. The main purpose of my describing the aforesaid facts is that music in Indian tradition has been considered very pure form of the fine arts.

It is the very famous saying, ***"Beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder"***. This applies to the beautiful musical tones too. As the literal meaning of beauty relates to the sense of vision, one may raise the doubts over the beauty of musical tones. But when it comes to the expressive meaning of the word "beauty", its scope seems to have no borders. Whatever gives you the pleasure, satisfaction, relaxation of mind, enjoyment etc. is said to be beautiful. The things, situations, tastes, events, occurrences etc. which one likes to experience again and again and feels happiness experiencing the same, can also be called as beautiful. Thus, everything that delights us is beautiful.

However, the term "beautiful" in different Branches of knowledge like philosophy, literature, moral sciences, cookery etc. has different meanings associated to it. Likewise, in the art of music this term has a specific meaning.

As the broadest platform of convergence amongst the musicians, it can be underlined that the musical compositions which are based upon the set norms follow the rules and patterns set by the musicologists, are original and authentic, have the capacity to entertain the connoisseur are said to be beautiful. Many more parameters can be attached to it as and when suitable. But the basic rules remain the same. We are aware of the fact that the term "beauty" differs from place to place and from one cultural background to another. Hence, the beauty with reference to music also takes different shapes in different sociocultural setups.

Here in India, we generally think in terms of our own musical traditions. ***In fact, the three basic dimensions of the arts in general and the fine arts in specific are:***

1. ***The place,***
2. ***The time and***
3. ***The circumstances.***

These three aspects change the terminology of any concept let alone the beauty aspects of music. Therefore, while studying the aesthetical values of any musical composition, let us keep in mind these basic aspects which really make a vital difference. That is the reason why, the music of comparatively the olden times is not appreciated by the new generation. The exceptions may lie here and there but broadly, it is found to be true that generation gaps can be seen in the fine arts too like every other sphere of our social

and cultural life. It is this generation gap which generates new trends and the fashion in the cultural scenario of the era. It is due to this fact that newer concepts, trends, systems, practices, habits, fashion etc. keep on emerging from time to time. **The famous poet Bhaas has once said, "The beautiful is that which is ever new".**

This newness of the compositions makes them appealing and beautiful. There are some classics which are liked in the present era too. It is because these classics are beyond the three basic aspects of arts namely: the time, the place and the circumstances.

Playwrights like Kalidas, Shakespeare etc were beyond the limitations of place, time and the circumstances. They chose the topics which the masses can still identify themselves with. That is why, their plays still satisfy the readers and viewers aspirations and expectations.

Likewise, the **Western composers like Mozart, Beethoven and Handel** as well as the Indian composers **like Tyagraja, Muthuswami Dixitar, Shama Shastri** etc. from the South and **Vishnu Digambur Pulaskar, Onkarnath Thakur, Pt. Ratanjankar** etc. from the North were ahead of their times. They composed very beautiful traditional Bandishes which are still being followed by the learners as well as the teachers of the Indian classical music.

In the field of Popular Music too, there have been some great composers who revolutionized the style of composing music. Great music composers for movie melodies like S. D. Barman, Madan Mohan, Anil Biswas, O. P. Naiyar, and many other artists have contributed their skills in this field. Their music is still listened with pleasure and satisfaction. Many singing stars – the classical singers or the playback ones – have shown us the new hopes and horizons following which we can contribute to the aesthetic value of our music.

Conclusion:

Through the above analysis, we can conclude that there is a fundamental relation between the arts and the aesthetics in general and between music and aesthetics specifically.

Two fundamentally different attitudes of consciousness created two just as different music traditions. They should not, however, be seen as opposite, but as complementary factors. It is steadily becoming more and more obvious that we must learn to understand the world as a whole, and the culture as the culture of mankind. Eastern thinking and feelings, Western culture and civilization, if looked at individually are only part of the whole. Only if we consider the inner interdependence of the two culture in the sense of a reciprocal correspondence will it be possible for us to understand each individual culture and even one's own. That is the reason Naada is considered to be close to the Almighty God. In our tradition of music, music has been associated in all the religious rites. Not only that, music has been an integral part of our cultural heritage. Thus, music cannot be studied without the study of the aesthetics.

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