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Relevance of Music in Vedic Traditions and Contemporary Context

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Abstract: Indian classical music has a very long-accumulated heritage of centuries. The origin of Indian music can be traced back to nearly two thousand years ago. It is undisputedly believed that the sage Narada introduced the art of music to the Earth, also it is said that the sound that pervades the whole universe, i.e. Nadabrahma, itself represents divinity. Scientifically structured Indian music owes its origin to the Samaveda. The Veda scriptures describe all the seven notes of the raga karaharipriya in descending order, which is a favorite research topic theory and treatise writers to explore, how the core sound 'Om' gave rise to the various notes. The first evidential reference to music dates back to 500 BC by Panini and the first reference to musical theory dates back to 400 BC found in Rikpratisakhya. Bharata's Natya Shastra dating 4th Century AD contains several chapters on music. This is the first known work that clearly elaborated the octave of its structured characteristics for various applications.

There is an eternal statement about the history of Indian Music, that "classical Indian music is derived from the Vedas". Although no one can say that this statement is false, it is deceptively simplistic, when discussing the Relevance of Music in Vedic Traditions and contemporary context.

Keywords: Music, Vedic Music, Vedic Culture, Indian Classical Music.

I. INTRODUCTION

Samgana is a form of music prevalent during the late Vedic period 3000-1200 BC popularly used for the chanting of the verses set to musical patterns. Jatigan was one example, evolved to narrate the epics to the masses. Prabandh Sangeet a very popular form of music written in Sanskrit was prevalent between the 2nd to 7th AD. This form evolved to a much simpler form called Dhruvapad used the Hindi language as the medium.

All the Indian classical music treatises like Natya Shastra and Brihaddeshi were written during the Gupta period which is considered to be the golden era in the development of Indian music. The Indian classical music, thus, developed from the ritualistic music in association with folk music and other musical expressions of India, developing into its own characteristic art form, further differentiated in the two schools of music, the Hindustani (North Indian music) and the Carnatic (South Indian music). Roots of both Hindustani and Carnatic classical music traditions branch out from Bharata's Natyashastra.

Dathilam was the next major scientific work on music, which endorses the existence of the 22 Shrutis per octave and also goes to suggest that these 22 Shrutis are the only ones a human body could make. This view was expressed and supported by Saranga Deva musicologist of the 13th century AD in his famous work Sangeeta Ratnakara. Saranga Deva, defined almost 264 Ragas, including some Carnataki and North Indian ones. He also described the various 'kinds' of 'microtones' and also categorized them.

Of the other important works on Indian music is to define the word RAGA by Matanga in Brihaddesi in the 9th century A.D. Sangeeta Makaranda of 11th century A.D. written by Narada itemize 93 Ragas and classifies them into two groups namely masculine and feminine. Swaramela-Kalnidhi of Ramamatya 16th Century A.D. and Chaturdandi-prakashika of Venkatamakhi 17th century A.D. further refined the structure to transcend to its present-day form. Initially Indian classical music was devotional in content and was purely used for ritualistic purposes, and was restricted to temples.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

It is evident that literary evidence gives a better look at the musical cultures of antiquity. These are frozen in time and not subject to change. There are difficulties when comparing written discussions and text with the actual musical practice however it is clear that the ability of literary discussions and text to extend our present picture into the past is a very powerful tool.

It is fortunate that the Vedas, especially the Sama Veda, are basically hymn books. Therefore, elements of the Vedic musical system are expressed both implicitly as well as explicitly within them. Furthermore, we are fortunate that India gives us the oldest surviving text on music and stagecraft in the world (i.e. The Natya Shastra).

Although there are very good musical texts which go back to the earliest periods, there are just not enough of them to provide a link to contemporary practice. There is a geographical and temporal gulf that separates many of these texts. In the current millennium, things are pretty clear. In the previous millennium before the available texts become fewer, but we are still able to interpolate what was happening in the intervening periods. As we interpolate and connect the few surviving texts of the Vedic period, our skill gets limited and the work becomes almost impossible. The personal capability to bridge the gaps between the Vedic texts and many post-Vedic texts is significantly limited. We are able to establish links between Vedic music and contemporary classical music but not distinctly.

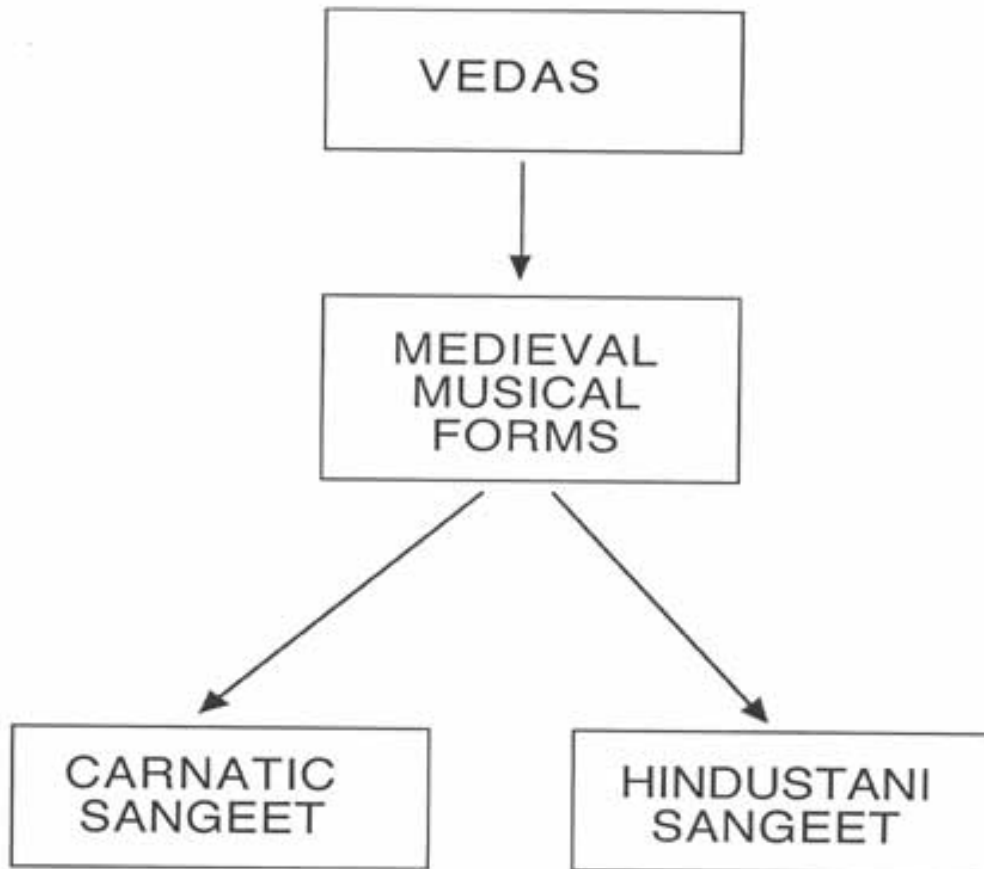
The knowledge of Music is documented in the ancient Vedic Literature and also in the oral tradition of Vedic families of India, who for centuries have preserved this knowledge in its completeness. It is proved that the ancient text and its practice is scientific, authentic, and reliable because it is a revelation of the most fundamental level of Nature's intelligence, the Science of Natural Law – is the common basis of all streams of knowledge, where the holistic value of Natural and specific values of Natural function in unison.

Vedic philosophy influences almost every aspect of Indian life. This is to affirm that contemporary life has changed with the passage of time and exposure to non-Indian and non-Vedic influences, but it does mean that Vedic influences are invalid in day-to-day life

III. MODELS FOR VEDIC INFLUENCE

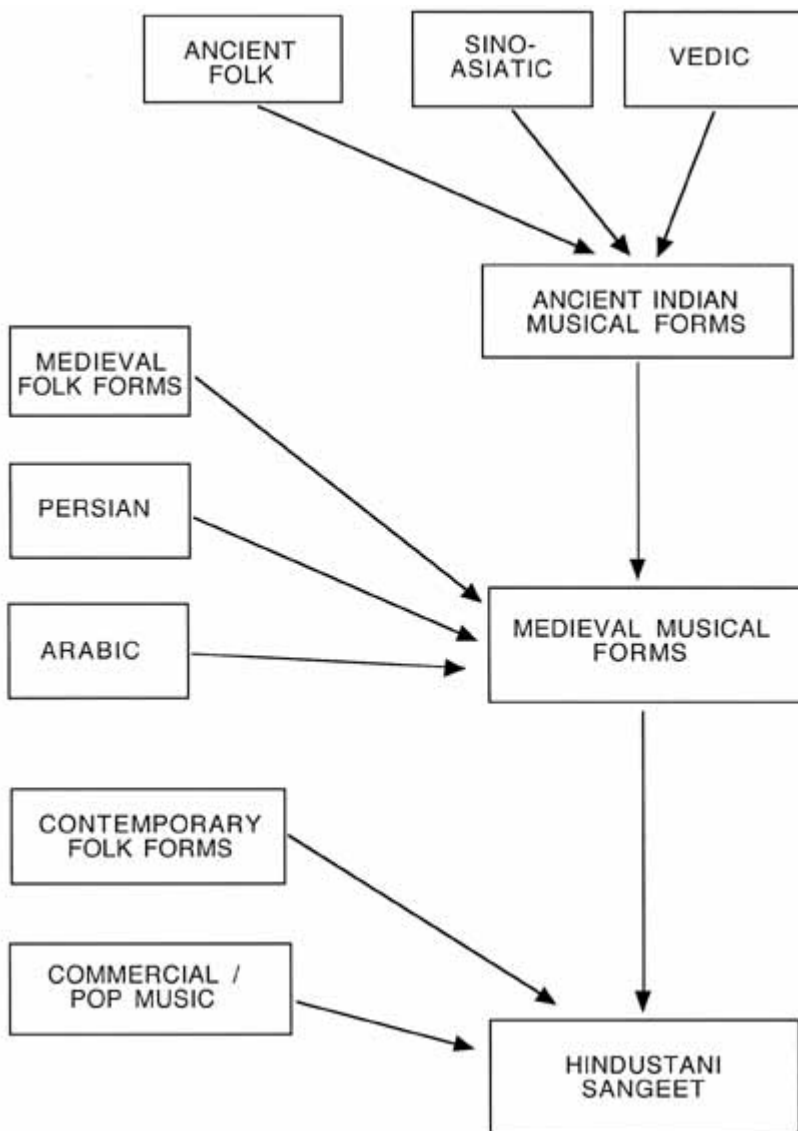
It appears that the greatest error found in the Indian mindset is not the belief that there is a Vedic influence in Classical Indian music, but the manner of this Vedic influence.

The prevailing model of this influence is shown in the following diagram-



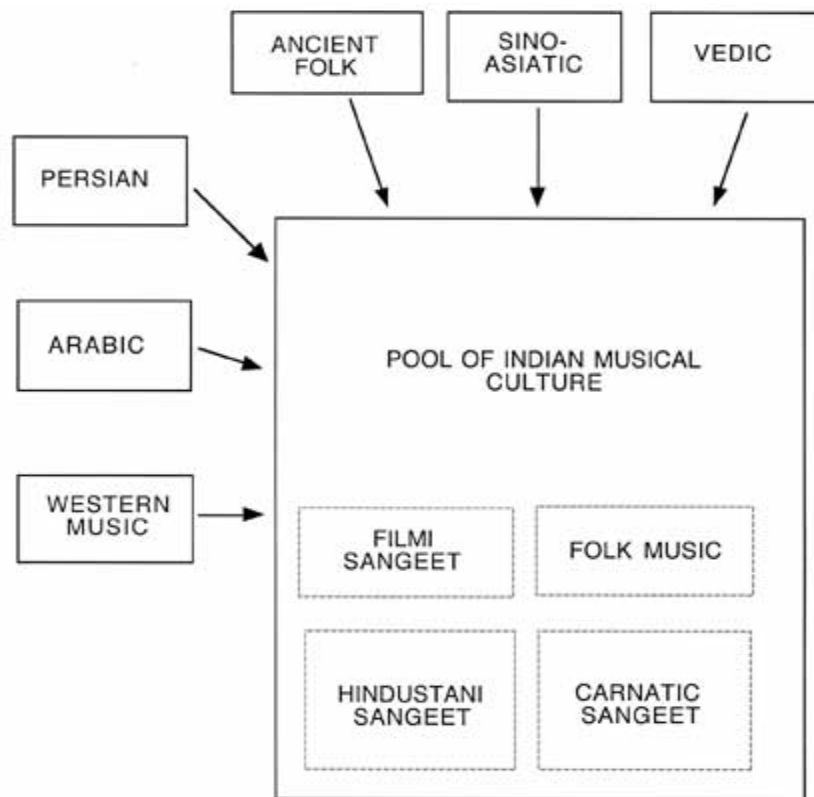
Although this model is the prevailing one among practicing musicians and the lay public, it is highly flawed. This model is based solely upon the principle of differentiation ignoring the process of amalgamation.

Musical amalgamation is a process whereby incongruent musical influences come together to create new musical forms and practices. Musical amalgamation is an extremely common phenomenon. Hindustani as well as Carnatic music, may be seen as amalgamations of various folk, classical, and foreign musical elements. The following model expresses contemporary Hindustani music in terms of the various influences-



It is surprising to note that the development of Carnatic music is similar to the development of Hindustani music. One difference is that the Persian, Arabic, and Sino-Asiatic influences are also seen but less in the derived forms of Hindustani music, Carnataki music is least influenced by these. More important is to note that the folk influences are very different due to the different musical cultures found in the peoples of the south India and people of north India.

We evolve the process of musical amalgamation as a supplement to the widely held view of differentiation; it is not a replacement. At first it appears that having both processes together is very complicated. Actually it is not so complicated. The confluence of amalgamation and differentiation are being similar to a giant pool into which various musical influences are added and from which musical genre are derived. This is expressed in the following diagram-



We need to first admit that this model is simplistic. However, it is a simple base that may be refined by academics to whatever level of precision that may be desired. Conversely, it may also be simplified without introducing too much distortion.

IV. RELEVANCE OF VEDIC MUSIC

Veda is the eternal music of Nature. Music is of coherent frequencies - some different, some same, many values of frequency or sound - and coherence in sound makes a melody. The whole universe, all the infinite number of items in the universe, is all different frequencies or sounds, and there is a swing of bliss everywhere in Nature. Scientific research studies have been conducted on the influence of Veda music in the areas of consciousness, behavior, physiology, and the environment, and further experiments continue to be conducted. Studies revealed that the beneficial influences of Veda are irrespective of an individual's personal musical background, taste, or subjective experience.

Earth, Stars, and Galaxies are moving around the sun always with the same motion without deviation following a particular path. Such a grand and magnificent demonstration would be possible only if it is balanced and harmonious. The more and more element of balance and harmony must be Nature's activity. This must belong to Nature's habit to follow the waves of bliss. The eternal harmony of Nature must be a pattern of bliss - the whole of Nature always swinging in the waves of bliss. This comes as the passage of evolution, which means more and more and more - more knowledge, more happiness, and more progress.

Indian Music is a piece of eternal music evolved from Nature as a part of nature, the melody of Nature is eternally the same, going on and on and on in swings of bliss everywhere. Indian Music is that powerful swing of Nature - those rhythms which are being maintained at all times. The maintenance of all those rhythms creates infinite variations well coordinated by Natural Law.

Stress and disharmony created by violating the laws of nature results in pain and suffering. The population of the world has not been educated to think and act spontaneously according to Natural Law. Cries, failures, problems, terrorism, and war - all these negative values springing from the violation of Natural Law by the whole population of the world.

Every level of creation is a unique frequency, one frequency merges into the other, and this is how the process of evolution takes place. The night ends and the dawn sets the phase of change from night today, when the darkness and dullness of the night are over, some inspiring freshness comes with a different refreshing frequency in the whole atmosphere. In 24 hrs of the day there are big changes in frequency; at evening, a different frequency; at midnight, a different frequency. The cycle of change is perpetually associated with a frequency there is the sound associated with every frequency, every stage.



Indian Music goes with this philosophy of time, setting its melodies according to the changing hour and environment; it sets forth those very natural melodies which match with the process of evolution. The sound associated with the associated frequency provides a powerful harmonizing influence in the whole atmosphere to balance imbalances in Nature.

Indian Music is one of the most refined evaluations of the sound, of frequency, ultimately, it's the self-referral dynamics of consciousness, which is infinite frequency. . . .

Indian Music is that eternal melody of Nature that is ever lively in Transcendental Consciousness; from there it reverberates and constructs different levels of creation. Indian Music forms the basis of all order and harmony from Nature; therefore, it has that most harmonizing, most integrating influence of a very precious science and art of creating one's internal harmony, one's family, one's city, one's country, and the whole world.

Vedic Science teaches all the different melodies and sounds and applies them to create a different experience for every situation, and circumstance. It's very providential that the Vedic scholars have been preserving all that enormously useful science and art of creating harmony in a situation of disharmony and discordance in the world consciousness. Veda is the knowledge source offers to the influence of Transcendental Meditation to hasten the day of celebrating world peace.

Indian Music is a must today in this generation when people are fighting and creating trouble for others. With all the problems in the international and national world, Indian Music is a must for everyone. . . .

We want the melodies to be played everywhere. Then, wherever it is morning around the globe, morning Indian Music is being played. Wherever it is ten o'clock around the world, Indian Music for that time of day is being played, and likewise at twelve o'clock, in the afternoon, and in the evening—all the time Indian Music is being played. It is established fact that whether someone listens to music or not, if those reverberations are created in the atmosphere, a harmonizing influence will prevail and imbalances will become balanced. This is the value of Indian Music. . . .

We express thanks to our Tradition of Masters, who have given us this insight into the activity of Nature and this gift of Indian Music to create harmony in Nature. Indian Music is a precious gift for the whole world and for all times.

V. CONCLUSION

We were living in an era of the knowledge society, valuing the application of knowledge for its contained quality, rather than living in an era where a shift from knowledge society to information society has become an ongoing process degrading the value of life and the contained quality of life. It is evident that there must be some type of contribution of the Vedas to contemporary musical culture and practice, which is not observed in continuity to contemporary culture, which is a mix of diluted Vedic traditions and prominent contemporary information society. The musical practices of the Vedas were long ago added to the general pool of Indian musical culture, from which countless folk, classical, and popular music were derived. This Vedic musical culture was in turn enriched by unfathomable numbers of indigenous folk, tribal, as well as musical cultures of every country that had any contact with India.

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