

CHAPTER - V

MUSIC AND RELIGION :

THE SEARCH OR SĀDHANĀ

CHAPTER - VMUSIC AND RELIGION :THE SEARCH OR SĀDHANĀ

चैतन्यं सर्वभूतानां विवृतं जगदात्मना ।
नाद ब्रह्म तदानन्दं अद्वितीयमुपास्महे ॥

We worship (upasnahe) the Nada Brahma (nada brahma) which is the life and consciousness in all creatures (chaitanyam sarva bhootanam), which appears in the form of the world (विवृतं जगत्) which is bliss par excellence (तदानन्दं) and which is non-dual (अद्वितीयम्) (vivṛitam jagat) (tadanandam) (advitayam).

Music and religion are pathways to God-realization. Religion is a discipline of self-discovery and self-realization which relays, on perfection of human development, the truth of the non-dual Brahman with natural ease par excellence. So is music a discipline dedicated to the peerless and blissful Naad Brahma which fills the universe and is realizable as God in the formless form of sound Eternal. Both religion and music emanate from That One, the Brahman, and as such both come to the faithful and the sympathetic one as the royal roadways to That which pulsates as Supreme Consciousness in all the living beings (chaitanyam sarva bhootanam) and holds them alive. Both are precisely the means of reaching and relaying 'Sua Swaroopanubhava' through medium peculiar to each of them : Music does this marvel through the art-form of 'naad brahma' and 'dharma' or religion does this through 'Shabda brahma'. 'Para Brahma', the Supreme Lord of the entire world of visible and invisible things and beings is the goal of the Search and enquiry of a religious man as also of the man of music. In other words, 'moksha' i.e. freedom from the thralldom of limiting body-mind-ego consciousness is what the devotees of music and religion aim at.

It merits full appreciation and free admission that music and religion are separate and distinctly distinguishable disciplines by themselves as far as the Sadhana is concerned, but both are so closely related with other that 'music plays an important part in religious functions such as daily ritual of worship in the temples and in such a casual simple practice as the reading of the Puranas or of holding the Hari Kathas.'¹ It is a well known fact that Hari Kathas are interspersed with many devotional songs. "Such traditions naturally helped music to preserve its vitality and survive in spite of complete neglect during the British Rule."² Not only that music in India was and is frequently employed in religious functions, but that music in our land is essentially spiritual in orientations and is learnt with religious purity and perserverance. In his Presidential Address, Vidwan Balsubrahmanyam, a great musician by himself, said : "Broadly speaking, the music in the West ^{is} mainly secular,

1. Prof. G.H. Ranade, History of the Music Tradition in Maharashtra with Special Reference to Dasopants' padas" published in "The Journal of the Music Academy", Madras, 1960, p. 92.

2. Ibid, p. 92.

orchestral, recitative and collective, as against ours which is spiritual, vocal, interpretative and individual".³

Our music, he continued to observe, "has its roots and tries to evoke spiritual emotions and is used mainly as a means for uplifting the human spirit towards God head". Thus are music and religion yoked to God-realization which is the supreme and sublime goal of human life on earth.

May it be pointed out that music is essentially 'nāadopāsaṇā', while 'dharma' is essentially 'shabdopāsaṇā'. But both intermingle with each other at various points of sadhana.

Both these disciplines, however, expect from respective devotees a certain and specific type of 'patrata' i.e., a sincere disposition of dedication, devotional concentration, longer sitting and deeper absorption in the naad and shabda and absolute and unalloyed trust and faith in the Master or Sadguru. It shall be worthwhile

3. Honourable V. Balsubrahmanyam, Presidential Address at the XXXII Madras Music Conference, published in JOMA, Madras, 1960, pp. 14-15.

to analyse, examine and appreciate 'naadopasana' which is, at base, common to both these disciplines in order that the healthy and harmonious bond demonstrative of closer kinship between music and religion is clearly spelt out.

Naadopasana:

Nada is a word with multiple meanings. Its meaning varies in different contexts, though the essential core of the meaning remains unchanged. In its essence, nada means 'stir of impuls of the Divine Will which manifests itself to the ear..... as sound."⁴ For a thorough apprehension of Nada-Sadhana, it is both desirable and reasonable to critically examine and evaluate 'nada' and its implications in two main aspects : (i) Philosophy and Metaphysics of nada; (ii) upasana of nada.

1. Philosophy and Metaphysics of Nada:

After the great cosmic night or 'maha pralaya' (dissolution of the universe) "the desire of the Divine for a new vision again of the lost world"⁵ sprouts itself as Sound Supreme -Paranada' -

4. Professor Jaidev Singh : 'Nada in Indian Tradition', printed in 'Psychology of Music', edited by R.C. Mehta : Indian Musicological Society, Bombay & Baroda, 1980, p. 37.

5. Ibid. P.37

which fills the entire akasha. The absolute or subjective Divine Will shapes itself into objective form as 'spanda' or motion. Motion implies sound. Treatises on motion in Indian classics call it as the first 'spanda'. Experience confirms that wherever there is motion, there is sound. Jaidev Singh quotes from Otto Karolyi's 'Introducing Music' "the creation of the world, however, it came about must have been brought about by motion and, therefore, sound."⁶ Our musicologists regard sound as the first expression of 'Ishwarechchha' (God's Will).⁷ In the Holy Bible also it is said : "In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and word was God".⁸ Since 'nada' is the first manifestation of the Will of God, Brahma, our scriptures hail it as 'nada brahma'.

Saranga Deva pays homage to Nada Brahma as 'upasya', worthy of worship, for all the devotees and dons of music. But it has to be properly

6. Ibid, p. 37.

7. *Rk. Vedā*: 1.7.3.

8. The Holy Bible, the gospel according to John, Catholic addition, Catholic Church Society, London, p. 86.

appreciated that the word 'nada' has a threefold connotation. It means (i) Supreme Sound - 'para nada'; (ii) Sound in general and (iii) musical sound or sound in the worship of music. In his Sangita Ratnakar, Sarang Deva includes song ('Geeta') and musical instruments (vādyā) in the nature of 'nada', but upholds the view that the musical sound is the product of word and, as such, the kinship of music with word can never be denied.⁹

And word the seeker experiences through a searching and sublime yogic discipline which the Guru imparts.¹⁰ He further explains that when Atman desires to express, it moves the 'vayu'.

The 'vayu' which resides in 'brahma granthi' gradually moves upward and through impact in the naval, heart, throat, head, mouth etc, expresses sound āvirbhāvayati dhvanim। आविर्भावयति ध्वनिं ।

In this slow upward movement, the 'Nada' creates itself, into 'pashyanti', 'madhyama' and 'vaikhari' forms of speech i.e., shabda. Nada is the 'parāvāk'. It is, as Swami Pratyagatmananda

9. Sarang Deva : Sangita Ratnakar : edited by Pt. S. Subrahmanya Sastri, Vol. 1. Adhyay 1, The Adyar Library, 1943, p. 22.

10. Prof. Vimala Musalgaonkar : 'Music and Sound in Yoga' published in Psychology of Music edited by R.C. Mehta, I.M.S.B. 1980, pp.45-46.

points out, the total thrill and overflow of the Basic joy of Being and Becoming.¹¹

Nada or Shabda is scripturally divisible into 'para', 'pashyanti', 'madhyama', and 'vaikhari' seats of sound. Some people hold that this division is 'tantrika', not 'vaidika', but this is a mistaken view.¹² For, there is a 'mantra' in the Rgveda itself which regards Nada as audible in four ways on four different seats or stages of its evolution. It says :

चत्वारि वाक् परिमिता पदानि
 तानि विदुर्ब्रह्मणा ये मनीषिणः ।
 ब्रुहा त्रीणि निहिता मेगयन्ति
 तुरीयं वाचो मनुष्या वदन्ति ॥¹³

The contemplative and seeing Brahmins who know the Vedas uphold 'that Vak (nada) is measured in four steps'. The three (steps) lie (unmanifest to gross senses) enwombed while the humans utter (and know) the fourth one."

11. Swami Pratyagatmananda : Japa Sutram: Vol. I, translated by Kumari Prem Lata Sharma; Bhartiya Vidhya Prakashana, Varanasi, 1966, pp. 66-69) Hindi edition.

12. Jaidev Singh, 'Nada in Indian Tradition', published in Psychology of Music; Indian Musicological Society, Baroda, 1980, p. 38.

13. Rg Veda, 1.164; 45.

This 'Vāk' is immense and immeasurable as well as without end and without beginning, but whosoever seeks the 'Vāk' through contemplation sees it not only enveloping the whole creation, but inhering the seeker too; and within the human framework of the seeker (i.e. man's body) the 'vāk' manifests itself moving from 'parā' to 'vaikhari' via 'pashyanti' and 'madhyamā'. This Rg Vedic experience of 'Vāk' is the first inspirational evidence of the truth that sound is eternal and thus experienceable through sadhana. Till man lives with things of the world with sensual attachments enjoying or worrying his lot, it is not possible for him to seek, see and share the life of 'sound' both inside and outside him. And once he starts living with sound through the practice of 'margi sangita' as instructed by a perfect Master Musician as described by Sage Narada, Matanga and Sarang Deva, he begins gradually experiencing sound (nāda) with all its grace-notes beauty and sweet grandeur pervading the sky as its 'tan-mātrā' and persisting in the hollow of human organism as 'vāk' with four seats as cited above. Not only this, the seekers gets so absorbed with the practice of ascending and descending 'svaras'

of the 'margi' music as given by the 'Deshika' that the world of things and beings outside the singing seeker start disappearing. The marvel of musical 'sadhana' is that even the things and beings start becoming, for the seeker, the 'svaras' and 'ragas' he/she is practicing. Everything, by and by, loses its distinctive identity and appear shaping itself into Nada. Only 'nada' remains, not even the seeker. For, the whole universe or cosmic creation is 'nadatmakam jagat'. One realizes during the process of intensely absorbing musical sadhana the truth of the Sangita-shastra-kara Sri Pars'vadeva's utterance :

न सिद्धयति बिना नादं तस्मान्नादात्मकं जगत् ।
नादात्मानस्त्रयो देवा ब्रह्मविष्णुमहेश्वराः ॥ १५

i.e.,

Sance (undergoing intense and accomplishing discipline of) 'nada', the all-pervasiveness of nada cannot be experienced, All the three gods : (of creation) Brahma, (of preservation) Vishnu, and (of dissolution) Maheshwara are 'nadatman-ah', soulful of nada.

14. Sri Par'svadeva : "Sangita Samayasara"; edited by T. Ganapatty Shastri, Trivendrum edition; 1925, verse 1.2, p. 31.

Spiritually speaking, Brahma alone is Truth (ब्रह्म सत्यं जगन्मया), the world ephemeral or unreal and Brahma expresses itself as 'nada' or 'shabda'. Writes Swami Prajnanananda : According to philosophy of music, the divine psyche or Atman is the foundation (अधिष्ठान) of music. The psyche sings eternally the immortal song of the absolute music, which is formless and colourless in essence, and yet it manifests itself as phenomenal music with the gross raw materials of tone, tune, grace, rhythm etc."¹⁵ The philosophy of music states that the absolute music is subjective, whereas its objective form is visual, and audible phenomenal music. The absolute music is as good as the Word of the holy Bible. He who hears and sings this music is truly the Master Musician, the great and glorious 'Deshika' who remains absorbed in unison with 'Deshi Sangita'. The Vaishnava mystics say that super sensual or celestial music is eternally going-on in the praise of Divine glory of Radha Krishna in the timeless and spaceless region called Nitya Brindavana.¹⁶ This absolute music is not, therefore, inconceivable but realizable only through

15. Swami Prajnanananda : A Historical Study of Indian Music; Ananda Dhara Prakashan, Calcutta, India, 1965, ch. XVI, p. 417.

16. Ibid, p. 418.

deep spiritual sadhana of the Word of the 'Deshika'. For, the phenomenal music, 'margi sangita', being the copy of absolute music (copying by the nadopāsaka), contains within it, the potentialities of divine nature and supra-mundane beauty of the absolute music. This brings one to the inevitable deduction that 'margi sangita' and 'deshi sangita' enjoy the same relationship as the seed and the tree sprouting up from it have. Hence, the divine discipline of dharma and the 'margi' discipline of music are not only closely connected but fullfilment of each other'.

Swami Prajnānānanda is thus very right and faithful to Indian tradition of classical music when he observes that "here the philosophy of music is looked upon as a spiritual 'sādhanā', which elevates and animates the level of man's consciousness, and kindles in the cave of his heart the perpetual light of the Divine knowledge, and makes him free from the den of delusions for ever."¹⁷ Music culminates into mysticism¹⁸ only when 'margi'

17. Ibid, p. 419.

18. Professor R.D. Ranade : 'A Constructive Survey of Upanishād', published by Bharati Vidya Bhawan, 1965, p. 87.

music as result of deeply spiritual sadhana, blooms or fulfils itself into 'deshi' music. In case of Devarshi Narada, Saint Tyag Raj, Swami Haridasa, Bhakta Soordas, love-lorn Princess Mira and hundreds more devotees of the lord, music was, like religion, a gateway to God-realization.

2. Upāsana of Nāda:

'Nadopāsana' is 'anandopāsana' and has its roots in seeker's longing for spiritual liberation through singing.¹⁹ As previously observed, the Sage Yogna Valkya deems music as a means to 'mukti'. Besides all the disciplines of knowledge available to man are according to our tradition supposed to serve as doorways to divine deliverance : 'Sarva Shastra prayojam atma-darshanam'.²⁰ That is why it is said Sa vidya ya Vimuktaye. Music sadhana in India is essentially yoked to the realization of the "idea of freedom of the soul" and it "takes man to the eternal haven of bliss and tranquility."²¹

-
19. Matang Muni : 'Brahaddeshi' edited by Bal Krishna Garg, Sangita Karyalaya, Hathras, 1976, p. 51 in Avataranika.
20. Dr. Sarapalli Radha Krishnan : Speeches and Writings published by Publication Division, India, Government of India, New Delhi, 1965, Vol. I, p. 171.
21. Swami Prajnanananda : A History of Indian Music, Ananda Dhara Prakashan, Calcutta (India), 1965, p. 302.

Music has been regarded by our Master Musicians, the Deshikas, as a living art having matter (sound) for its body and spirit (melody) for its soul. In other words 'raga' is the psychomaterial body of music which takes its shape out of the permutation and combination of tones and micro-tones, which are again surcharged with moods and emotional nuances of the singer.

For the purpose of sadhana one has to know from the Master Musician that there are seven tones divisible into twenty two microtones (srutis) and that the latter are classified into five species : ayata, mridu, madhya, karuna and dipta.

दीप्तायता करुणानां मृदुमध्यमयोस्तथा ।
श्रुतीनां यो विशेषज्ञो न स आचार्य उच्यते ॥ २२

'Ayata', according to sanskrit grammar is derived as 'A-yama-ta' from the root 'yama' meaning restraint. This restraint, balance or emotional tranquility (शान्तावस्था) is the first essential requirement of a 'Sangita-Sadhana'. 'Mridu' stands for softness or kindness i.e. a humane attitude of

22. Sage Narada : Naradiya Shiksha : Commentary by Bhatta Shobharaka; Varanasi, 1967, p. 40 (V.S. 2021) 1.7.9.10.

affection towards life is the second essential. 'Madhya' is expressive of maitu-bhava, i.e., friendly disposition (also sakhya). 'Karunā' represents continuing mood of compassion, of 'vatsalya' for all irrespective of caste, creed, colour, culture or country. 'Dīptā' stands for 'lighted up' or well-kindled. Thus the very entry into music presupposes the inculcation. Thus is how Muni Bharat has, on the strength of Nāradiya Shiksha, worked out twentytwo microtones on the basis of a pentagon of microtonal units. It needs appreciation that Music thus symbolizes the 'nāda' way to Self-realization.

Rightly has it been then observed that music is the language of the Impersonal. For, it seeks its origin and expression in the solemn and silenceful depths of the soul, where a 'dikhshita' (initiated) in music evolves into the sublime and perfect state of a 'deshika'. The evolutionary journey of the devotee of music from the personal state of 'dikhshita' to the impersonal state of 'deshika', master, is a long, sustained and soulful journey through the 'Nāda Marg' culminating into the realization of Nāda-Brahma. In that realization the initiate of music blooms into a mystic musician

like Sage Tumburu, Saint Haridas, St. Surdas, St. Tyag Raj and the like ones. Thus in true traditional spirit, the lover of music takes this journey as a spiritual discipline or 'sādhanā' and through 'sādhanā' he or she not only propitiates or worships the goddess of music, Devi Saraswati, but finds 'solutions to the mystery of life and finally attains God-realization.'²³

Thus the seeker begins his 'sadhana' of music as religiously as the seeker of self-realization does. Both approach the Master with devotion and faith, urge him to accept the seeker as his disciple and instruct him on the path. The Mundakopaniṣhad tells that the seeker of Brahma-Vidya - whether 'nāda' - brahma or 'shabda'-brahma - should approach the Guru in utter humility with a spirit of total surrender (samit-pani-hi).²⁴ The Guru, having accepted him as his disciple, imparts him the primary lessons and asks him to learn them by heart. It is worthwhile to observe Sage Yajna Valkya's advice which he gave to Maitreyi, his wife;

23. Swami Prajnanananda : A Historical Study of Indian Music; Anandadhara Prakashana, Calcutta; 1965, p. 307.

24. Mundakopaniṣhad : 1:2:12. "One Hundred & Eight Upanishads" edited by Wasudev Laxman Shastri Pansikar; Nirnaya Sagar Press; Bombay, 1925, p. 15.

He said : 'Atman 'alone is to be seen. Listen Meditate, Live (the listened Truth).'²⁵ This exhortation applies to both the persons : to him who wants to learn music as well as to him who wants to see God. The word coming from the mouth of the perfect Master i.e., the Guru has to be heard, meditated upon, and sincerely practised and truly lived in life. That is the way. Nothing short of it can be of any avail on any of the pathways. Thus begins the seeker's sadhana with Guru as the sole and supreme guide.

'Aum' (ॐ) is the primal or seed word and the seeker has to so process his sadhana that the word reaches where from it came. Word came from God and must reach Him, if the seeker wants fulfilment of his sadhana. It is a sacred syllable that is used in 'pranayama' in the religious discipline of yoga. It is called (Pranayama braham) 'मणव ब्रह्म' in sacred and sacerdotal literature of India and is the alpha and omega of our Sangitopasana also. 'Aum'^ॐ is the 'nāda' brahma and has the power, beyond human imagination, to life its devotee to the heights of perfection. As

25. Sage Yajna Valkya : 'आत्मा वा अरे दृष्टव्यः ।
श्रोतव्यो मनाव्यो निर्दिद्यमितव्यः ।'

such, the act of processing one's sadhana is to be taken, as an act of penance. It is (tapa) 'तप'. Its sanctimony has to be maintained with loving concern and charged with regardful care. One has to practise the word punctually, regularly and for longer hours in the presence of Guru who is, as per spiritual experience, three gods rolled into one : Brahma, Vishnu and Maheswara. Says the great musicologist Saranga Deva:

नक्षोपासनया देवा ब्रह्मविष्णु महेश्वराः ।
भवन्त्युपासिता नूनं यस्मादिते तदात्मकाः ॥ 26

By worshipping 'Nada', the worship of Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh is certainly (नूनं) accomplished; for they are spiritually identical with Nada (एते तदात्मकाः). To lend 'sangita sadhana' the requisite aura of serene austerity the musicologist Pt. Soma Nath says in his famous Raga Vibodha :

मार्गः स यो विरिञ्चायै ।
अनिवृष्टो भरतायैः शंभोरग्रे प्रयुक्तोऽर्च्ये ॥ 27

-
26. Saranga Deva : Sangita Ratnakar : edited by Pt. S. Subrahmanya Sastri, Vol. 1, Adhyay 1, The Adyar Library, 1943, p. 63.
27. Pt. Soma Nath : Raga Vibodha : I.6: edited by Pt. S.S. Sastri; Adyar Library, 1945, p. 9.

i.e., "This Margi music is that variety which is formulated by (Guru as) Brahma etc., and which is practised by (the disciples like) Bharata etc., in the presence of (Guru as) Shambhu i.e. God Maheshwara. Guru is the fountain-source of the 'Margi' way of 'nadopasana' and the 'marga' has to be traversed personally by the sadhaka in the sublime and instructing presence of the Guru. The sadhana begins when the word pouring out from the mouth of Guru enters the heart of shishya through ears, the intaking sense organs of sound. No writing or reading work is encouraged or allowed by Guru for the simple reason that any third intermediary between the teacher and the taught is a disturbing factor, a positive distraction on the 'marga'. Music must first be allowed to enter the heart of the learner, for 'S'ravana' (श्रवण) is the only way. The sadhana has to be 'guru-mukhi' (गुरुमुखी) and not 'Man-mukhi' (मनुमुखी). Let thus the disciples mind be tuned to the listening of Guru's music so that the heart of the sadhaka receives with rapt attention the subtleties of the grace-notes and nuances of music. Only when this practice of intake of Guru's word or music is gradually perfected, the next stage of 'sangita-

sadhana' is truly reached. This is the essential meaning of the word 'शुद्धोः अग्ने' used in the aforesaid couplet by Pt. Soma Nath. Music has to be learnt in the physical presence of (Guru as) Shambho, because the 'good' (शुद्धि) of the 'shishya' 'fructifies' (भक्ति/भक्ति) only in his watchful living and correcting guidance.

The next or second stage in this 'margi' discipline is the repetitive recitation of Gurumukhi music at the 'Vaikhari' level. At this stage the seeker begins to sing recitingly the Gurumukhi music repeatedly for regular practice as per Guru's instructions. Thus the word entering through ears comes on the learner's tongue via reverberating heart. A time comes when, after constant and cautious practice, the Gurumukhi music coming to the disciple at 'Vaikhari' level gets established on the tongue or throat of the sadhaka. Though the seeker's heart works as a mere ^{reservoir} ~~reservoir~~ of the dhyana shlokas, ragas and raginis, 'tāls' and tāns', at the first stage it has yet to further evolve gradually winding its course to finally reach the 'para' level where from the word sprang up in the Guru's heart. In this journey, the second stage is that of the 'madhyama

vāk'. Sangita now remains well established on 'Vaikhari' seat of singing but time and again it slips into the seat of 'Madhyama Vāk'. Gurumukhata grows a little deeper and the seeker now experiences that the music is first hybernated in the mutterings of throat through the heat of the Guru's word. For, our scriptures regard Gurumukha as Agni-mukha and the word as the blazing flame of fire that sheds light of wisdom and sinks the darkness of ignorance. This flame is no other than the Agni-jivha-Saraswati,²⁸. Saraswati Devi has been rightly identified as 'nada rupaha'²⁹ by all the musicologists including Pt. Somanath, S. Rangaramanuja Ayyangar has also written: "The two words, 'Na' (ना) and 'Da' (दा), were interpreted as life-breath and body-heat, or vice versa. The word Nada meant the interaction of the two forces, air and fire..... the mind kindles the heat in the body, the heat, in turn, prompts the life-breath which reposes in the Brahma-granthi, tiny knot of nerves round the navel. The breath of air moves up

28. Swami Prajnanananda : 'Historical Development of Indian Music'; Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyaya, Calcutta, 1960, p. 51.

29. Pt. Soma Nath: 'Raga Vibodha', edited by Pt. S. Subrahmanya Sastri, Adyar Library, p. 7.

with a low rumbling sound through the region of the heart, throat, head and the vocal apparatus. This sound that touches the five regions is distinguished by different names - 'Atisukshma', 'sukshma' Pushta, Apushta and Kritrima."³⁰ Saranga Deva's definition of 'nāda' seems to be the main basis of R. Ayyangar's description given above. He says :

नकारं प्राणनामानं दकारमनलं विदुः ।
जलः प्राणनिग्म संयोगात्तेन नदिऽभिधीयते ॥ 31

that 'Na' stands for breaths or 'air' and 'Da' stands for 'fire'. The experts have observed and held that the sound born of the combination of air and fire is called 'nada'.³¹ Other great musicologists like Matanga, Devarshi Narada, and even the modern writers on Indian classic music regard 'nada' as the product of the play of air and fire in the sadhana of a learner on the 'margi' way.

The sangita sadhaka realizes during the course of sadhana that breath-control and bodily

30. R. Ranga Ramanuja Ayyangar : History of South Indian (Carnatic) Music; Arya Bhushan Press, Poona, 1972, pp. 9-10.

31. Saranga Deva : Sangita Ratnakar; 1.3.6.

health and strength are of vital need; and, as such, the whole body, not merely throat, is to be kept perfectly trimmed and toned up like Veena in the hands of a musician. The human body is deemed by a lover and practitioner of music as 'shariri veena' (शरीरी वीणा)³² for all vocal music emanates from it only. Bharata tells us in his 'Natya Shastra' that

“शारीर्यमेव वीणायांस्वराः सप्त प्रकीर्तिताः”³³

This view of musicologists is also shared by St. Kabir who says that this body of man is exactly a 'tanpura', a city of songs. He says that 'यह तन ठाठ तम्बूरा'³⁴ which has to be screwed or disciplined in such a way that the Music Divine which is potentially lying dormant there in finds a spontaneous, sublime and sonorous outlet. At this stage of 'madhyama' singing, the sadhaka realizes not only the importance of keeping the body fit for music, but of the power and grace of Guru whose word now tends to rise from 'madhyama' instead of from the 'Vaikhari'

32. Professor Vimala Musalgaonkar : 'Music and Sound in Yoga'; edited by R.C. Mehta; Indian Musicological Society, Baroda, 1980, p. 49.

33. Bharata : Natya Shastra : 34. 810. 30.

34. St. Kabir : Pt. Hazari Prasada Dwivedi, Raj Kamal Prakashana, New Delhi, 1980, p. 265.

level. His body becomes a temple of 'nāadopasaṇā' in the same way in which the yogis' body becomes a fit spiritual laboratory of 'yogopāsaṇā'. In this temple of music, the body, the 'ragas' and 'raginis' gain ascendancy on the throne of heart, the 'madhyamā' seat of sound. Here the ragas sung out by the Guru are not only learnt by rote and repeatedly recited for hours in practice by the sādhsaks', but are conceived as per Guru's word as having images. The Guru has certainly experienced 'ragas' in their divine forms, but the pupil has yet to experience them. As such, the pupil has to content himself with the explicit understanding that 'ragas' do have etherial forms and can be realized through intense sādhanā at its third 'pashyanti' stage. Writes Swami Prajnañānanda :

"the ancient seers saw in their ecstatic vision the divine forms of the 'ragas', realized them, and transmitted them to humanity."³⁵ That is why a 'raga' is, to the Indian musicologist, not merely 'an inert structure of tones and tunes, but "a psycho-material object that spiritualizes both the body and mind, and helps man to transcend both matter and mind, so as to get the luminous apprehension of the Absolute."³⁶

35. Swami Prajnanand : A Historical Study of Indian Music, Anand Dhara Prakashan, Calcutta, 1965, p.304.

36. Ibid, p. 304.

Legends singing the glory of 'rāgas and rāginis' are legion. They portray the quest for truth, beauty and excellence (सत्यं सुन्दरं शिवम्) even in celestial regions. "Incidentally", says R. Ranga-ramanuja Swami Ayyangar, "they reveal secrets of the art through divine personages."³⁷ "It is true", said Lord Vishnu to Nārada, "music that conforms to technique has an instant, universal appeal. But technique is only a means to an end. The aim of all music is exaltation of the mind and flood-lightning of the soul. Nevertheless the charm of music lies more in the flush of sweetness than in abstract technique."³⁸ More than technique, it is soulfulness that counts in music. That is its 'elan vital', its life force that shapes itself into the divine forms of 'rāgas'. This accounts for the currency of 'dhyāna shlokās' of ragas, on the one hand, and defines rāga as heavenly beings with all the attributes of divinity, on the other. Through the dhyān shlokās the ragas are invoked with utmost reverence in the heart.

37. R. Ranga Ramanuja Ayyangar : History of South Indian (Carnatic) Music, Poone, 1972, pp.11-13.

38. Vishnu Purana : cited by Ranga Ramanuja Ayyangar in his work at footnote (37), p. 13.

It merits recapitulation that when the music coming from Gurumukha establishes itself at the 'madhyama' level, the gateway to 'pashyanti vak' is silently opened and the sadhaka's singing gradually gets into the fourth stage. As a matter of fact, music at the 'vaikhari' and 'madhyama' seats of sound is an expression of music at the 'parā-peethā', but the sādhak does not realize this truth for the simple reason that he has received the music from Gurumukha. It has not evolved from within himself; for he is following the mārgi sangit only. Guru's music, which he sings to please God like Swami Haridas and Saint Tyag Raj, is Deshi Sangita, whereas the Shishyas' (disciple's) music which he sings while learning in a bid to propitiate goddess Saraswati is margi sangit. For the former is firmly established in the 'desha', the Fount Eternal, of music while the latter is on the marga leading to the 'desha'. Thus when the sangita-sādhanā of the singing disciple crosses the madhyamā stage, the singer begins to 'see' the ragas and raginis. This perception of 'Rāga' is the result of the bestowal of grace by the Guru, though the devotional intensity of disciple's sādhanās' is also of significance. This 'seeing' or 'darshana' of the angelic form of the rāga or

ragini during the course of singing that raga or ragini is a pure spiritual act of soulful singing. Hitherto at the madhyama level music was 'purely intellectual', but now it rises to 'spiritual' heights at the 'pashyanti' stage.³⁹

Bhartrihari and some others maintain that the state of pashyanti is the eternal shabda Brahman itself, and 'madhyama' and 'vaikhari' are the manifestations of pashyanti; that 'pashyanti' is the 'Summum bonum' of human existence; and that it is itself transcendental consciousness in which the distinction between word and meaning disappears.⁴⁰ But Helā Raja and Puñya Raja discard this view of Bhartrihari and spine that 'pashyanti' is the first divine manifestation of 'Sabda Brahma'; it is not 'Sabda Brahma' itself as Bhartrihari holds.⁴¹ Both these views appear to contradict each other, but both are correct from each other's point of view because both the views are born of 'spiritual'

39. Gauri Nath Shastri: 'Philosophy of Word and Meaning'; Sinha Publishing House, Calcutta; 1954, pp. 74-75.

40. Swami Prajnanananda : 'A Historical Study of Indian Music; Ananda Dhar Prakashan, Calcutta, 1965, pp. 400-401.

41. Ibid, p. 401.

experience of soulfulness at the 'pashyanti' level. Since Bharatrihari is essentially a 'yogi', his experience of 'Shabda Brahma' is absolutely correct, for the 'Shabda' or 'mantra' flashes forth in the golden flame of light at the 'pashyanti' level. It is this experience which makes yogi a 'Seer of Mantra' (मन्त्रदर्शी), a Rishi in the Vedic sense. But spiritual journey does not end here. The next stage is of 'para' meditation where the Rishi flowers into a Maharshi, where he sees everything into his own self and his own self into all things and beings of the cosmic creation, where the meditator, meditation and the object of meditation fuse into each other in the non-dual state of identity of spiritual oneness. Likewise in the case of sangita sadhana, the devotee of music 'sees' at 'pashyanti' level not the mantra, but divine entities of ragas and raginis in the divine luminosity of the soul. Both the experiences are divine in nature and transcendental in character.

Let both these experiences be studied in light of what Sir John Woodroffe observes : "All things have a threefold sense : Supreme (परा), Subtle (सूक्ष्म), and gross (स्थूल). Para-Vak

is the causal stress... Pashyanti-Vāk is vak actually going forth as Iksānā (seeing), producing or manifesting as sūkṣma madhyamā vāk or Hiranyagarbha-sabda..... In the Rg Veda, Saraswati (V. 43.11) is called Pavirāvi or daughter of lightning."⁴²

Regarding this phenomenon of the 'ragas' and their 'Sreni' (class) Pt. Soma Nath (1608 A.D.) quotes a shloka from the Aumapattam by Umāpati (14th century A.D.) :

शुद्धीरञ्जनकारी श्वेन च्छयालगः पराश्रयतः ।
संकीर्तनस्तु भय धा मत मुदितमुभापतेरेवम् ॥

Which means that "Umāpati has said that the 'ragas' of pure type are the embodiment of the Lord Shiva, while 'Chhayalags' or 'Salaga' type of ragas are that of Shakti, and the 'Samkirtana' type of 'ragas' are that of Shiva-Shakti combined principle".⁴³

May it be called that the intuitive and contemplative musicians and musicologists have

42. Sir John Woodroffe : 'The Garland of Letters', 1922, p. 1.2.

43. Pt. Soma Nath: 'Raga Vibodha': IV. 3: ed. by Pt. S. Subrahmanya Shastri, Adyar, 1943, p.

described two forms of 'ragas' : 'devatamaya' and 'nada' or 'Shabda-maya'. Devatamaya ragas are actually seen and sung at the 'Pashyanti' stage of Sangita Sadhana. Pt. Soma Nath has clarified the doctrine of invoking the presiding deities of the ragas by means of 'dhyana' shlokas and says :

उक्तं रूपमनेकं तत्तद्भाग्यं नादमयमेवम् ।
अथ देवतामयमिदं प्रथमतः कथयेत्तदेकैकम् ॥

i.e., 'That is called rupa, which, by being embellished with sweet flourishes of 'svaras' (tones), brings a 'raga' vividly before one's mind. It is of two kinds, 'nadatma' (one whose soul or essence is sound) and 'deva-maya' (devata dehamayam), one whose soul or essence is an image incarnating the deity, of which the former has many phases and the latter has only one'.⁴⁴ These divine forms of ragas are incarnations of Nada Brahma and each raga has only one definite form. Regarding the divine visual form of the 'ragas', Professor O.C. Gangoly has enquired "How can the language of words be translated into the language

44. Ibid., V. 167-168,

of form ?" and has himself answered : "the new discoveries of science in various spheres are achieving new miracles everyday, and expert scientists have discovered common fundamental principles underlying the 'language of sound and language of form. It has been proved that when sound develops a very large number of vibrations it can convert itself into visible forms. At such a stage audible things and objects become apprehensible on the path of eye-sight".⁴⁵ But these do not and perhaps cannot explain as to why only a particular divine form only is perceptible when a specific raga is sung, though with the same 'mula svaras' but with different and variable presentations of the pattern of svaras. On the basis of certain peculiar theories as to the essence of Indian melodies enunciated by our musical sages and seers, it can be said, observes Prof. O.C. Gangoly, that "each 'raga' and 'ragini' has its peculiar psychic form, corresponding to its sonal body over which the former presides as the nymph, deity or devatā, presiding genius or the god of that

45. Prof. O.C. Gangoly: Ragas and Raginis, Bombay, 1948, quoted by Swami Prajnanananda in his 'A Historical Study of Indian Music', Ananda Dhara Prakashan, Calcutta, 1965, p. 338.

particular melody. These devatas of Image-Forms dwell in the super-terrestrial region - the Paradise of Musical Symphonies - from which ethereal region each melody could be evoked and induced to descend to this earth through the prayer of the musical performer with the aid of definite symphony, peculiar to each melody".⁴⁶ In order to induce these angels of music, the 'rāgas' and 'raginis' to descend from their Paradise to the dusty level of this earth of ours, our music practitioners have to undertake strenuous penances and sadhana and send up their prayers in peculiar shapes through different forms of meditative processes and formulas, to please these Angels through these melodies, descend on the voice of our musical instruments."⁴⁷ As a result of the descent of these Angels in their divine forms, this mortal man and material place of the invoking and adoring sangita sādḥaka are divinised for the time being and the sādḥaka has a unique chance of tasting the Heavenly Ambrosia.

46. Prof. O.C. Gangoly; 'Raga and Ragini', Munshi Ram Manoharlal, Delhi, 1948, p. 96.

47. Prof. O.C. Gangoly: Ragas and Raginis, Bombay, 1948, quoted by Swami Prajnananda in his 'A Historical Study of Indian Music', Ananda Dhara Prakashan, Calcutta, 1965, p. 339.

What more proof of music being religious or spiritual is needed? Music and religion are not only tied in a holy bond of kinship, but music is, in its ultimate essence, purely religious in nature and spiritual in content. In this context the words of Sage Narada are memorable and worthy of recall:

शगाः षडयशगिव्यः षट्-त्रिंशत्चारु विग्रहाः ।
आगता प्रहस्य स्वदसि प्रहसानं समुपासते ॥

i.e., "The six Major Melodies (Ragas) and thirtysix Minor Melodies (Raginis) - with their beautiful bodies - emanate from the Abode of Brahma - The Transcendental Being - and sing hymns in honour of Brahma Himself."⁴⁸

It is here at the 'pashyanti' stage that the meditative and contemplative singer not only sees the 'roopa-mayam ragam' in its divine splendour, but also enjoys - its celestial flavour. As and how the sadhana is firmly established at this stage of 'seeing' the music-nymphs, the 'nāadopāsake' realizes, though gradually by the grace of Guru, the Master Mystic Musician, that music is a divine melody ever

48. Sage Narada : Pancham Sara Samhita; quoted by Professor O.C. Gangoly in Rages and Raginis; Vol. I, Munshi Ram Manohar Lal, Delhi, 1948, at pre-introduction blank page.

enlivened by the following ten sparkling qualities :

(i) perfect (पूर्ण); (ii) gay (प्रसन्न); (iii) sweet (मधुर); (iv) tender (श्लक्ष्ण); (v) equipoise (सम), (vi) crimson (रक्त), (vii) pulled (विकृष्ट), (viii) fresh, soft and smooth like a divine child (सुकुमार), (ix) embellished (अलंकृत), and (x) manifest (व्यक्त).⁴⁹ The sadhaka also partakes of the hitherto- never - experienced refreshing 'rasa-mayata' of 'shabda-brahma' and 'rupa-brahma'. It is a novel experience holding the sadhaka in a transcendental state of complete self-forgetfulness in the divine presence of the practice or performance. Effect of the relish of 'rasa' leaves a wonderful and abiding impact on the mind of the performer-pupil ~~and~~ when he is back from trance to the state of normalcy. It creates a 'concentrated state of mental harmony (Sattvodreka) (सत्त्वोद्रेक) unadulterated with any other element of human nature' and as a result there of there emerges sattvika ānanda in the performer as well as in the hearts of the listeners. A peculiar 'bhāva' is generated which becomes an additional inspiration and strength for still deeper thrust into sādhanā which eventually

49. Swami Prajnanananda : ' A Historical Study of Indian Music', Ananda Dhara Prakashan, Calcutta, 1965, p. 347.

opens up an aperture into the Omni-presence of 'parā' luminosity where 'Nāda' reigns supreme in its all-ravishing grand glory.

When the 'pashyanti' stage is crossed and entry into the 'parā' seat of sound is attained, sangita is first felt and then experienced to rule the universe by its silent, sombre, sweet and shining sound. Here the 'roopa-mayata' or 'deva-mayata' of music's 'ragas and raginis' loses its distinctiveness; here the 'Shabda-mayata' of dhyana-shlokas gets dissolved into the eternality of sound. For, both fire and air are held up in un-identifiable unison of spirit in the nāda-samadhi at the 'para' stage of 'mārgi sangita': 'rupa' is born of fire; 'Shabdā' is reverberating product of sky; and 'touch' is the 'tanmatra' (तन्मात्र) of air. When the sādhanā moves forward progressively from vaikhari to madhyamā, from 'madhyamā' to 'pashyanti', the onward thrust of sangita becomes more graceful, subtle and smooth. At the 'pashyanti' stage, it gains the ecstatic touch of effortlessness and when the 'mārgi' sādhanā transcends the limits of this stage and enters the precincts of parā music, 'sangita' born of Guru's word at the vaikhari level

reaches its home, the 'desha', where 'nādamayātā' is realized where the Deshika, Desha and Shisya blend into unifying harmony of Sound Primordial 'ॐ' (Aum).

Here, at this stage, an effortless realization that the power-seed of divinity that lay potentially dormant prior to the beginning of Nādapasaṇā has not only sprouted but has grown to its limits and the river of upāsaṇā has merged into the ocean of its fulfilment. Many call it total awakening of 'Kundalini Shakti'. Some regard it as the terminal point of margi sangita. Certain others hold the view that the Sādhaka, at the 'parā' stage realizes himself as Nāda Brahma, not merely by self-effort - nor also without it - but mainly by the power and grace of the Mystic Musician who, as his Guru, imparted him the Word in absence where of no nadopasana could have begun. It is here that the immortal and oft-quoted saying of Lord Vishnu gains significance and becomes really meaningful :

नाहं वसामि वैकुण्ठे योगीनां हृदये न-च ।
मद्भक्ता यत्र गायन्ति तत्र तिष्ठामि नारद ॥

These words were told by God Vishnu to Narada on being asked as to where does He appear to stay before the spiritual ones. He said that though He is omnipresent yet "He manifests Himself with a special favour ~~not~~ in the vaikuntha, nor even the meditating hearts of the Yogis but in places where my devotees sing." 'Gāyanti' (singing melodiously) devotees are they who are well-lodged either at the 'pashyanti' or at the 'parā' stage of sangita sādhanā. When music is dedicated to sing the glories of the Lord, music is said to have fulfilled its essential purpose. For, it reaches where from it emanates. It does not mean that music has no secular purpose to serve. 'Loka Ranjan' is good but 'Hari Ranjana' is better. It is no use debating that music has or has no relationship with religion. It needs, however, to be borne in mind that the singer is no other than the Atman, who is the very life of man. Music is essentially and inevitably the expression of the 'Brahmātmaikyam' (ब्रह्मात्मैक्यम्) which the jeevatma begins to realize at the 'pashyanti' level of 'nādoṣāṇā' and is finally established in this Abode of Brahma (ब्रह्म-सदीस) 50

50. Sage Narad : 'Pancha Sara Samhita' cited by Professor O.C. Gangoly in 'Raga and Ragini', Munshi Ram Manohar Lal, Delhi, 1948, on Blank page between Preface and Introduction.

This lofty conception of the origin and purpose of music as enunciated in Naradiya Pancha Sara Samhita (नारदीयं पंच सार संहिता) and in almost all the Indian musicologists thereafter give it the sublime status of Adhyātma Vidyā i.e., spiritual science. And the experiences of the nadopasakas from Maharshi Yajna Valkya to Tyāga Rāja of medieval age and from ^{R.}Bal Krishna Buwa Ichalkaranjkar, Pt. V.D. Paluskar and Ustad Allaudin Khan to Pt. Ravishankar, Nikhil Banerjee etc. of modern age flowering into self-realization with intermediary transcendental (atindriya) (अतीन्द्रिय) audio-visualization of the angelic forms of 'ragas and raginis' (चारु विग्रहाः) ⁵¹ amply confirm the religious basis and mystical character of music. In fact, all the great musicians have lived dedicated lives in just the same way as the men of religion have lived in the spiritual path; and all of them scaled the heights of seers and mystics, be it music or religion.

51. Ibid, at Pre-Introduction blank page.
