

CHAPTER - VIII

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Any consideration of music in relation to moksha merits a syonthetic analysis of three perspectives : music in moksha; moksha in music; and music as moksha.

Music in moksha is a spiritual experience. When one on the path of music takes to 'nādanu-sandhāna', he lovingly and respectfully binds himself to a discipline required of him by the quest. The discipline of the seven manifest 'svaras' etc. is not at all easy to observe; it

entails an austere life of total dedication, sincere adherence and hard toil round the clock. The word of the Master Musician -- a human embodiment of Nāda Brahma -- is the key to his conduct, a sovereign command to be obeyed with faith and without 'buts'. For that is the way to music. What is sung by way of practice, as per master's instructions, is not the real music but only a replica there of. Cooking is not eating, though it may lead to it. The 'mārga' leads to, but is not the 'manzil'. 'Mārgi' music, how so ever effective and alluring, is only a pale shadow of the soulfulness of music which is nāda-brahma. He who realizes this as a result of sincere, ceaseless and devotional practice of 'mārgi' sangita for a long time and is graced by the Guru, enjoys the bliss and blessedness of 'moksha' which is end of all disciplines and purusartha (पुरुषार्थ). Moksha is man's own real nature, but enmeshed as he is in the 'I' and 'My' mire of ego perceptions that lead to separative and divisive tendencies which bind, he reaches and realizes it not only when his ascending sādhanā born of hard toil and the descending Grace of Guru, the Godman, coalesce into each other, the Inner Music is heard in the

liberative infinity of Sound eternal reverberating in the corridors of the Self. 'Mārgi' music is in 'Deshi' Sangita which is the 'moksha-dhāma' (मोक्षधाम), the liberating-source of the former. Music is thus there in moksha.

Till one achieves self-realization through personal effort as inspired, instructed and graced by a powerful Sadguru, it is of no use to talk of moksha or 'nāḍānubhava' and 'nāḍa-brahma'. But this much can be averred with due legitimacy that every successful step taken on the path of freedom is sufficient to yield an experience of release from bondage entailed in at least a step so taken. For example, four steps must inevitably be taken by one aspiring to achieve a perennial state of post-degreetal freedom in the field of formal education. The four steps are : higher secondary; graduations; post-graduation; and doctoral degrees. When one takes the first step by passing the higher secondary examinations, one is qualified to undertake graduation course of one's choice. By implication, the aspirant has freed himself from the bondage of fear and ignorance which haunted him before he crossed the first hurdle.

And when he passes through the second and enter the post-graduation course, he experiences and enjoys the freedom from fear and nescience that pinched him before he acquired success in taking the second step of decorating him with a University degree of graduation. So, he goes on and on till he reaches the acme of formal education which crowns his steps of success with the award of Doctoral Degree of literature (D.Litt.). Each step forward releases him from the fear of the former and a time comes when no fear remains. He is free. Likewise, on the long, arduous and zigzage path of 'mārgi' sangita one has to cross hurdles after hurdles through regular and round-the clock hard practice involved in Sangitopāsanā of the highest quality before a window is opened and entry allowed into the kingdom of Nāda Brahma. Each step taken ahead in 'nādotpāsanā' is a sweet experience of release from the tension of nescience of a 'raga' specifically now realized. Though there is only an experience of release in piecemeal or installments, each step is decidedly a step into larger freedom ultimately leading into the experience of the endless expanse of Nāda. Moksha is in music at each step. 'Tan-mayatā

(वन्मयता) deep absorption in music is 'moksha' in music, par excellence.

When the journey is complete and destination reached, the former is fulfilled in the latter and the latter fuses and flows into the former with fullness of life and music supreme. There the music, like the Ganges flowing into the ocean, mingles and mixes up with moksha, losing its separative or distinctive identity altogether. And, as Jagadguru Shankarācharya sang out : 'jeevu-brahmaiva na para'. So also it can be averred with similar zest for truth : music is moksha and moksha music.

The inalienable kinship of unity between music and moksha may be better appreciated through the analogy of the 'seed-and-tree law' - Bija-Vriksha-Nāyaya. The seed is in the tree (i.e., in the fruit on the tree); the tree is in the seed; and the seed is the tree.

Briefly, the oak lies asleep in an acorn. In other words, tree is sleeping in the tree but it is not visible. It becomes manifest only when the seed is sowed in a fertile piece of soil and

water is given in due proportion so that after the lapse of few days, as a result of the play seed, soil, water and sunshine, the seed gets burst and sprouts up breaking the crest of the soil. Lo, the seed is torn and the plant is born. As months and years roll by the plant grows into a mighty tree, giving shade and shelter to many. It is the same small acorn, the tinyseed, which has now developed into a big oak like tree. When the tree enters the blossom of its youthful growth, numerous fruits are seen growing on its multiple branches. And, when the tree is graced by its seasonal touch fruits ripen and are plucked for human consumption. People eat and enjoy the fruit, but the careful and expert planters choose some ripened fruits, dry them up and from each fruit they take out the necessary seeds for future plantation. It is the same seed which became the tree and is ready again to be reborn. The cycle continues. Fruit is the fulfilment of seed via full growth into tree. Now, the tree was invisibly sleeping in the seed; when the tree woke up; the outer shell of the seed was broken, and as it began to develop and branch out, earlier limitations gave way and it gained in form as well as in spirit. The seed fruited in time

to deliver more seeds. A seed became the germinating ground of several new seeds. The seed is in the tree. The tree was in the seed. And, now, the seed is the tree and vice versa. The seed, the tree, the fruit - all are one.

In the same manner, we can see how the 'mārgi' music is the seed; music on the pathway of regular and ceaseless practice is the tree of music; and 'deshi' music is the ripened and juicy fruit on the tree which becomes the 'yoni' of 'mārgi' seeds for different seekers of musical excellence in the expert hands of the 'Deshika', the planter of music in the heart of a sangita-sādhaka.

'Mārgi' sangita enters the Book of Music; it is the scriptural seed. When this seed is sown by the Deshika in the 'hrit-bhoomi' (हृद्भूमि) i.e., soil of heart of the aspirant of musical blossom in life, the seed gets torn and plant of music is born in aspirant's life - 'hridayasthali' (हृदयस्थली) - as and how the loving care and devotional fervour with which the plant of musical practice is tended by the sadhaka of 'mārgi sangita' and as and how the seed, the soil and the sun

(deshika) come into full play with the bestowal of sun's grace, the plant blooms into tree; tree gains the blossom of fruits and, lo, the seed of 'mārgi' sangita has fulfilled itself into the fruit of 'deshi' sangita. The scriptural word is transcended; the Vina of Life's music begins to fill the life of an aspirant - become - deshika'.

Music is released from its earlier bonds. Not only is music free, music is itself freedom incarnate. Music is moksha. Only a 'Deshika' i.e., a Vāggeyakāra who is a perfect embodiment of 'shabda' brahma and 'nāda' brahma in human form knows it from direct, first hand and intuitive mystical experience of Nada Brahman that from the viewpoint of aspirants' intellectual perception 'music is in moksha', from the 'mārgi' music practitioner's point of view 'moksha is in music'; and from the 'deshi' sangitajna's viewpoint music and moksha are two names of the one Reality - the Nāda Brahman.

Music is thus not only a rhythmical and melodious means to self-realization or mukti, music itself is the revelation of the self, the Brahman. This is precisely the meaning and message Sri Saranga Deva wishes to convey through the verse of

'manglācharana' to his monumental work on Indian Classical music 'Sangita Ratnakar' :

चैतन्यं सर्वभूतानां विवृतं जगदात्मना ।
नादब्रह्मं तदानन्दं मद्भितीयमुपास्महे ॥ १

i.e., We worship (upasmahe) the Nāda Brahma (nāda 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 nondual (अद्भितीयम्).

He also says that all the gods of the famous Trinity - Brahma, Vishnu, Mahesha - are assuredly worshipped beyond doubt by Nāadopāsenā because they are nādatmakā-ha.

नादोपासनया देवा ब्रह्मा विष्णु महेश्वराः ।
भवन्त्थुपासिता नूनं यस्मादेते तदात्मकाः ॥ २.

Saranga Deva rightly sings elsewhere in this very voluminous treatise that Siva, the Ultimate Reality

1. Prof. G.H. Tarlekar : 'Sangita Ratnakar by Sarngadeva' - A commentary in Marathi in three volumes, Maharashtra Rajya Sahitya Sanskriti Mandal, Bombay, I ed. 1975, Vol. I, 1.3.1, p.53.

2. Ibid, p. 54.

out of whom everything including the whole creation emanates, in whom it is preserved and promoted, and by whom everything is soaked and sucked up into nothingness, is the Fount Eternal of Music which fills the universe and is called 'nāda tanu', the body or form of Nāda. He says:

वन्दे नादतनुं लामुद्बुद्वज्जदगीतं मुदे शंङ्करम् ।

Music is thus the song of soul. Soul is none other than Shiva or Shankar. That is why Devarshi Narad, 'the first Bhagawat - musician',³ who proclaims playing his Vina and singing aloud 'Nārayana, Nārayana' was explicitly told by the Lord that 'O, Narada ! I stay where my devotees adore Music and sing with cheer' - mad bhakta yatra gayanti tara tisthami, Narada ! No wonder 'Nāda-Moorti' St. Tyaga Raja had adored Nārada as his Guru and in one of his kannada poems on Narad he calls Narada "the honey-bee on the lotus of Nāda" - Sri Narada Nāda Sarasiruha Bhringa. And, in his Vasanta Song - Etila Dorikitivo - Tyaga Raja

3. C. Ramanujachari : The Spiritual Heritage of Tyaga Raja, R.K. Mission Students Home, Madras, 1957, p. 48.

says that it is as a fruit of his sweet music that he has been able to realize God - 'Suswaroopa Nāda Phalamo'.⁴

Maharshi Yajna Valkya's conclusive observations in his Smriti are a pointer to the same logical deduction that music paves the pathway to spiritual liberation or 'moksha'.

भृगुयाथा पाणिका दक्षविहिता ब्रह्मगीतिका ।
 जेयमेतत्तदभ्यासकरणाम्भोक्ष संज्ञितम् ॥ ४ ॥
 वीणा वादन तत्त्वज्ञः श्रुतिजाति विशारदः ।
 लालशङ्खाप्रयासेन मोक्षमार्गं नियच्छति ॥ ५ ॥

i.e., The constant singing of the Rik (vedic mantras), Gatha, song of soul (Brahma-Gitika), Panika etc. verily bestow's divine. Status called 'moksha' (III.4). He who knows the truth of Vina music, is also adept at Srutis and their varieties and is the best knower of tala etc., reaches the zenith of moksha - marga without effort and exertion (a-prayasen).

4. Ibid, p. 44.

5. Sage Yajna-Valkya: Siriti : N.S. Press, Banaras, 1951, IV. 4.115, pp. 53.

Music is thus a much nobler and higher revelation than philosophy, Reference needs to be made here to Tyaga Raj's song in Chitta-Ranjani (sung in Kharahara-priya), a sanskrit composition, in which he pays obeisance to Siva, whose body is Nāda, who is the quintessence of Sāma Veda, the delightful and the best of the Vedas, and from whose five faces Sadyojata etc., the svaras emanated. He sings with love, faith and devotional experience thus:

नादतनुभानिशं शंकरं नमामि मे मनसा शिरसा ।
 मोदकरं निगमेत्तम सामवेदसारं वारंवारम् ॥
 स्वद्योजातादि - पञ्चवक्त्रज - सुरिगमपथनि - वरसप्तस्वर ।
 विद्यालोलं विदीप्तकालं विमल - हृदय - त्यागराजपालम् ॥

It deserves to be noted that in this purely Sanskrit poetic piece, Tyaga Raja has incorporated part of mangalacharana of Sangita Ratnakar of Sarng Deva I.1) वन्दे नादतनुं - - - - - शंकरम् Lord Krishna has said in the Srimed Bhagawat Gita that "after numerous birth (बहूनां जन्मनां अन्ते) the Jhāni

6. C. Ramanujachari: The Spiritual Heritage of Tyaga Raja, R.K. Mission Students Home, Madras, 1957, p. 54.

(ज्ञानवान्) seeks my shelter (मां प्रपद्यते) and achieves liberation".⁷ But St. Tyaga Raja says that in this very human birth man can enjoy 'moksha' and be lodged in the light of one's own supreme self only through divine music and devotional music itself is 'jeevan mukti'. In one of his songs he juxtaposes Veda and Śāstra, Advaita Jñāna and the secrets of the Nāda Vidya, implying thereby that a mastery of the secrets of music confer the same 'Summum bonum' as Vedantic knowledge and spiritual realization gained by metaphysical pursuits.⁸

One may ask as to how does music lead to moksha. M. Harkare writes in his article entitled 'Sangita Se Samadhi Tak' i.e., from music to moksha, that "Sangita Śāstra is essentially based on yoga Śāstra whose paramount objective is Self-realization which makes one 'jeevan - mukta'.⁹ Yoga is absolute control of mind and sense through disciplined concentration of mind - "Chitta Vritti Nirodha".¹⁰

7. Lord Krishna : Bhagavad Gita: Ch.VII, Shloka 19.

8. C. Ramanujachari, The Spiritual Heritage of Tyaga Raja, R.K. Mission Student Home, Madras, 1957, pp. 50-51.

9. Manohar Harkare : 'Sangita Se Samadhi Tak', (Hindi) Bhakti Sangita Ank, Sangita, Hatharas, U.P., 1970, (January), p. 7.

10. Sage Patānjali: Yoga Darshan : G ita Press, Gorakhpur, 1986, I.2, pp. 1-2.

For, this one pointedness or concentration of mind - manas-ekagrāyam (मानस एकाग्र्यम्) - is the pre-requisite of salvation and is the first step on the path of Brahma-jnana:

मोक्षमार्गं मोक्षोपायभूतं मनस एकाग्र्यं
ब्रह्मज्ञानं हेतुं नयच्छति ॥

Vijnāneshwar, the author of Mitākshara finds this significant especially in sage Yajna Valkya's expression 'tal-jnanascha' (तालज्ञानञ्च), for the constant attention which tala requires when singing, brings about concentrations of mind which serves as a springboard for transcendence into meditation which leads to spiritual freedom.¹² Thus it is seen that the Moksha-Sādhan-Tattva of music is through enabling the mind to develop the power of contemplation conducive for a deeper devotional dive into the music of soul. For, till the aspirant is with 'Shabda' Brahma, he is on the path of 'mārgi' Sangita, however refined, rejuvenating and rhythmically melodious it may be. This 'Shabda' brahma - the seed of music - has to be transcended and 'nāda' brahma experienced. In this experience

11. V.S. Iyer: Religion, Art, Culture, College Book House, Trivandrum, 1977, p. 15.

12. Ibid, p. 15.

the seed develops into the Tree of Music i.e., 'deshi' sangita. To put it briefly, 'mārgi' sangita is relative and manifest music; 'deshi' sangita is absolute and unmanifest sangita which makes the sangita - sādḥaka a siddha sangitajna, a Deshika or Vāggeyakāra. The great Nath Yogi poet Bhartri Hari states :

शब्द ब्रह्मणि निष्वातः परं ब्रह्माधिगच्छति 13.

that one expert in the music of 'shabda' brahma can enter after transcending the limiting barrier of the Word, the Realm of the Illimitable Param Brahma. This transcendence is of paramount significance for it is the only door-way for the 'mārgi' sangita to fulfil itself into the 'deshi' sangita. The seeker of music enters the source and, becoming one and identical with it, realizes himself as the Supreme soul, free from all bonds and limitations that fetter. Moksha is his music.

There seems to be no better way of closing the discussion of this chapter than to cite the immortal words of wisdom of Adi Acharya Shankar

and the holy exhortation of devotion by St. Tyaga Raja - the former is Parama Jnāni and the latter is Parama Bhakta says Bhagawana Shankarāchārya:

नादानुसन्धानं नमोस्तु तुभ्यं
 त्वां साधनं तत्त्वपदस्य जाने ।
 भवत्प्रसादात् पवनेन साकं
 विधीयते विष्णु पदे भजे ॥ i.e.

O, Nādānusandhāna ! Salutations to Thee. For I have known the means of realizing that-hood. By thy Grace my mind merges, together with the breaths, in the perfect equipoise of Vishnu-pad 'i.e., Self or That-hood). In his Garude-dhvani 'Kirtana', as if with a clarion call St. Tyaga Raja proclaims:

" श्री नायकाश्वल निजमाचरित
 संगीत ज्ञानसु ब्रह्मानन्द-सागर
 मीदनी देहमु भूमि भासु "

i.e.,

"Rama ! one that does not float on the ocean of music, adored by gods and vedas, which is Brahmanad itself, is verily a burden to the earth".¹⁴

14. C. Ramanujachari: The Spiritual Heritage of Tyaga Raja, R.K. Mission Students' Home, Madras, 1957, p. 55.