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## RABINDRA SANGEET IN CONTEXT WITH INDIAN CLASSICAL MUSIC

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### Abstract

This study will present a comprehensive look at Rabindra sangeet and Indian classical music. The purpose is to explore the musical calligraphy of cultures through the spiritual significance of Rabindra sangeet. The objective of the research is to explore the raga, tappa, and dhrupad gayaki which is an integral part of Rabindra Sangeet. As Tappa is a lighter variety of Hindustani classical music and Indian classical ragas which are used in Rabindra sangeet have much more depth in nature makes it a very interesting study for research. The elements of Indian classical music have been used in an extremely intelligent and effective fashion in Rabindra Sangeet, therefore the application of classical elements are beautifully decorated and sung with different emotions and with different Parjaays in Rabindra Sangeet.

**Key words:** Rabindra Sangeet, Dhrupad Gayaki, Parjaays in Rabindra Sangeet, Teaching Styles in Rabindra Sangeet, Tappa Style in Rabindra Sangeet.

### INTRODUCTION

Song, musical Instruments and dance are called music together with the predominance of the word song. In a word, music is the heartfelt creation of tone, colour and rhythm.

In the case of Indian music, two styles can be observed. One is the Hindustani method; the other is the South Indian method or the Karnataka method. According to many, these two methods were the same in ancient times. But later, as a result of historical changes, these two methods became distinct. The music prevalent in North and East India is called Hindustani Method and the music prevalent in the south of Vindhya-parvat i.e. Madras, Mysore etc. is called South Indian method or Karnataki method. There are some Ragas that are similar in both the styles but are named differently, and there are Ragas that only belong to either of the styles.

Rabindra Sangeet is a creation of songs by Nobel Laureate poet and composer Guru Rabindranath Tagore and the songs are also evolved with Indian Classical Ragas and tappa. The flavours and variety of Indian classical music plays an important part in Rabindra Sangeet. They are very popular in the Bengali culture



in India as well as Bangladesh. These songs portray an enormous range of human emotions. They emulate the tonal colour of Indian Ragas, thus providing the songs with their emotional content. Rabindra Sangeet is mostly based on Hindustani Ragas; therefore, here we have worked only with Hindustani Ragas. Some basic terms of Hindustani music that are used here are ragas, vadi note, samvadi note, that and pakkad.

### **raga**

A *Raga* may be defined as a melodic structure with fixed notes and a set of rules that characterize a certain mood conveyed by a performance. It is basically the framework provided to compose music. The *Raga* consists of notes (*swaras*) which give it a musical structure.

### **VADI NOTE**

The *Vadi* note is the most important note of the *raga*, and it is also usually the most frequent note as well.

### **SAMVADI NOTE**

The *Samvadi* note is the second most important note.

### **THAAT**

The *Thaats* are considered to be parent modes, which form the foundation for every *Raga*. There are ten different types of *Thaats* in Hindustani classical music. Each *Raga* in Hindustani music belongs to any one of the ten *Thaats*.

### **PAKKAD**

Pakkad is the structure of each *Raga*. It is the organization of notes that help in identifying the *Raga*.

Tagore songs easily blend into his work whether it is poetry, stories, or plays. Each song is known to express a deep human emotion, which is brought to colour with the use of Hindustani Ragas. The music is inspired not only by the Ragas, but also by the folk music of Bengal and Western Tunes. There are some songs that follow the characteristics of the *Raga* very strictly, but there are some songs that have a blend of two or more Ragas or probably belong to one *Raga* but do not strictly follow the *Raga* structure. Hence, it is a challenging task to predict the *Raga*; the Rabindra Sangeet is based on.



The composition of Rabindra Sangeet is such that for a beginner, it is very difficult to recognize the Raga from the song being played, for example, the song “aha jagipohalobibhabari” has more than 300 notes in the entire song. The existing methods of *Raga* classification cannot be directly applied to *Rabindra Sangeet* due to its diverse nature. Every song is different, and the creativity of the composer does not follow the strict structure of Indian *Ragas*. Also, due to the heterogeneous nature of these songs, the classification used is unsupervised.

The influence of Classical music on Rabindra Sangeet has been amply analysed and now stands as an accepted fact. In particular, there has been a pronounced influence of Rabindra Sangeet on some of the noted classical instrumentalists of North India.

The elements of Indian classical music have been used in an extremely intelligent and effective fashion in Rabindra Sangeet. It is indeed one of its most significant features. The application of this ingredient was however dictated principally by the perceived requirements of the mood evoked in the song, which was after all the core entity of his creation.

Therefore, the application of classical elements, more often than not, had been subtle, and only to the extent necessary to express the emotive content of the song. The urge to evoke a particular mood to his own satisfaction, often led him to blend ragas in unexpectedly beautiful and interesting ways, or to look for uncharted and unexplored nuances within the known frameworks of ragas. For example, in the song – “Shedindujone” one finds such an entrancing portrayal of the Raga Peelu; here the notes of this rather common raga have been played with creative mastery. In the song “Chokhe-r aaloey” - one finds a simple yet serenely beautiful depiction of Raga Yaman Kalyan.

In RabindraSangeet there are assimilation of many ragas of Hindustani classical music, for e.g.-

- Raga Bilawal – Ajiherisongsaramrito, dekhajodidile
- Raga Gour-sarang – Agunerparoshmonichao, andharshakhaujolkori
- Raga Bhairav – Aha jagipohalobibhabori, ajprathomphulerpabo



### **DHRUPAD GAYAKI IN RABINDRA SANGEET**

The name Dhrupad has been coined from the word Dhruvpada. The songs of this style are sung in a special process and rhythm by the alap of Nom, Tom etc. and its melody is special. Its nature is slow and deep, it is about the language chapter and in it the deep rhythm instruments are accompanied by the rhythms of Pakhawaj, chartaal, jhaptaal, etc. (Dutta. 2013).

As a child, Guru Rabindranath was particularly influenced and inspired by two musicians in his musical pursuits. One of them is Vishnu Chakraborty and the other is Srikantha Singh. Vishnu Chakraborty was one of the best dhrupadis of Bengal in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He was the first music Guru of Rabindranath Tagore. Vishnu Chakraborty used to teach songs of the early Brahmosamaj in the style of Dhrupad. Moreover, Hindustani dhrupad, Khayalgayaki were sung only in the living rooms of zamindaars and rich people.

Radhika Prasad Goswami and Shyamsunder Mishra were the last to be appointed as music teacher in Thakurbari. Radhika Goswami was also a singer of BrahmoSamaj and has a wealth of various dhrupads such as dagarbani, khandarbani, gauharbani or gobarharbani, nauharbani, dhrupad of the mixed family.

Rabindra sangeet also has songs influenced by Tappa; Thumri and Taranabutits numbers are very limited e.g. the song of the nature of thumri is "Ki surbajeamarprane", "Haikedibir" are taranaprakriti's songs.

### **TAPPA ORIGIN & DEVELOPMENT**

Tappa is a particular type of Gitabandha (composition for vocal music), which was created by Qabbal "singers of Punjab". It is apprehended that tappa was originated during the first half of 17<sup>th</sup> century. It is supposed that tappa is originally a folk song of Camel Drivers of Punjab – Sindh region, so the language of its lyrics is essentially Punjabi. It was generally sung by the male singers of Punjab. The other form of tappa was sung by the female singers of Punjab as a wedding song. It is pure and simple love song. Tappa music is also very popular in Bangladesh and gradually a style of its own has developed. Ramanidhi Gupta or Nidhubabu is said to be the creator of tappasongs. Along with Hindustani tappa, Nidhubabu's tappa song was also highly appreciated in Jorasanko's



Thakurbari. So, naturally Rabindranath Tagore was influenced by tappa songs. However, boltan is predominant in Hindustani tappa but it is not sung in Rabindranath tappa. Some songs are based on Hindustani songs, but Rabindranath Tagore's distinctiveness in terms of style of services, style of composition, decoration etc. is also noteworthy. Tappa is a lighter variety of Hindustani classical music. These songs are characterized by their beaded appearance. Rabindranath Tagore had preferred the Bengali variant or Nidhubabu's Tappa rather than its Punjabi or Shouri-mian's Tappa for his compositions. The tappa gayaki is placed in different songs in such a beautiful manner that the feel and flavour of the songs became much more divine.

In Rabindranath's tappa-ang songs a special elegant of Sanskrit form can be noticed. There is not so much ornamentation in those songs that the lyrics of the song may remain unspoken or stressful, such as: "Sarthakjanamamar" (Desh, sahitayasanakhya, 1360, p. 138). Following are the Tagore songs which are correspond to Tappa style:

#### Shavari-Tappa

- Jaowaasarieikikhela

#### Behag-Tappa

- Chiroakhacherona
- Bhairavi-Tappa
- Bondhuraoraho
- Hridoybasonapurnoholo
- Pipasa hay nahimitilo

#### Kafi-Tappa

- Eporobashe robe
- Kebosileaji

#### PARJAAYS

Classification of songs was done by Rabindranath Tagore himself according to the subject of the songs and can be seen in the collection, the book 'Geetabitan'.



They were classified in six Parjaays - Puja (offerings), Swadesh (Patriotic), Prem (Love), Prokriti (Nature), Bichitro (Amazing) and Anushthanik (Ceremonial). The first Parjaay, Puja, has twenty-one upa-parjaays or sub-classes, Prem has two and Prokriti has six Upa-parjaays.

In the 'Geetinatya O Nrityanatya' (Opera and Dance Drama) section six dramas are included - Kaalmrigaya, Balmiki-protibha, Maayar-khela, Chitrangada, Chandali and Shyama. Bhanusingha Thakurer Padabali is a series of twenty songs written by the poet at an early age. Natyageeti is a section where songs written for several dramas are included. Jaatiasangeet is another section where songs to chant and praise for India have been chosen. Songs for offerings and prayers have been included in Puja O Prarthana section. Another section with some more ceremonial songs have been created as anushthanik sangeet. The next section is Prem O Prokriti.

### CONCLUSION

From the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century till today Rabindrasangeet has been established on a throne at a sky-height, in the warmth of many people in the world. The popular Bengali songs like tappa, padavali kirtan, ramprasadi, baul, bhatiali etc. also provided him with enough inspiration. Rabindra sangeet assists in creating culture, characterized by a community of people, representing their customs, ethnicity, history, philosophy, and traditions. The language and speech of spirituality is as varied as the sounds of the Earth. It presents cultures with a refreshed relevance in people's lives, and provides a way for individuals to relate to other cultures. Exploring the musical calligraphy of cultures throughout the world is a wonderful way to explore the spiritual significance of Rabindra sangeet.

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# The message of World Peace through Rabindra Sangeet – A Study

Dr. Rajesh G. Kelkar\*  
Bhumika Trivedi\*\*

## ABSTRACT

*This study will present a comprehensive look at different modes of Rabindra Sangeet and its larger reverberation in world peace. The purpose is to traverse the musical calligraphy of cultures through the spiritual significance of Rabindra Sangeet by Guru Rabindranath Tagore. The objective of the research is to explore different parjaays of Rabindra Sangeet with peace at different levels: peace at the global level, peace within society, peace between human beings, peace with nature and peace within self. Rabindra Sangeet can transcend communities, cultures, and creeds. It also continues to inspire spiritual expression as sound reflects and affects faith and values. Beliefs and perceptions will transcend the very nature of music and lyrics. spirituality is an essential part of who we are, and it forms the framework of our world. Community, culture, and creed all offer insights into the connection between music and spirituality. Rabindra Sangeet cultivates community, as sound creates communication and unity. Cultivation is a constant process that develops, encourages, and nurtures.*

*Rabindra Sangeet assists in creating culture, characterized by a community of people, representing their customs, ethnicity, history, philosophy, and traditions. The language and speech of spirituality is as varied as the sounds of the Earth. It presents cultures with a refreshed relevance in people's lives, and provides a way for individuals to relate to other cultures. Exploring the musical calligraphy of cultures throughout the world is a wonderful way to explore the spiritual significance of Rabindra Sangeet.*

## Keywords:

*World Peace, spirituality, different parjaays in Rabindra sangeet, faith and values.*

## Introduction

Guru Rabindranath Tagore is one of the best poet in the world. As a teenager, he wrote "Vanusinghe's verses" following the footsteps of Vaishnava poets, and devote himself to literary work till the last day of his life. His innumerable literary creations are an invaluable resource of India and the world. Talent is

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perhaps a formidable force that can't be stopped by a bolt that makes its own way on its own. That is why we see so many great thinkers in this world who have worldly nobility.

Rabindra sangeet makes the moment of the mind smoother and the mind suddenly becomes overwhelmed with an unknown joy. Behind the creation of music, the poet has his deep personal thoughts and a deep affection for the world and nature. This idea brings the poet to his great music world. The poet has united man and nature and the scope of love is there. His love is not isolated from nature. (Dutta)

In the world of music Guru Rabindranath Tagore is like a great sage. He has written numerous Essays, science fiction, novels, short stories, poems, plays, dance plays. His music is popular today and is known as "Rabindra Sangeet". The most amazing aspect of Rabindra sangeet is the depth of the lyrics and the abstraction in most of the Tagore songs. We call Rabindranath Tagore as 'nibhrato pran er debota' ie God for the lonely soul, friend of the lonely soul. Rabindra sangeet is also very near to spirituality as its one of the important prajay is "Pooja Parjaay". List of different parjaays in Tagore's songs are as follows: - (Geetabitan.com)

- Puja (21 upa-parjaays)
- Swadesh
- Prem (2 upa-parjaay)
- Prakriti (7 upa-parjaay)
- Bichitro
- Anushthanik
- Geetinatya O Nrityanatya (6 upa-parjaay)
- Bhanusingha Thakurer Padabali
- Natyageeti
- Jatiya Sangeet

- Puja O Prarthana
- Anushthanik sangeet
- Prem O Prakriti
- Nrityanatya Maayar Khela

### **Influence of western music in Rabindra Sangeet**

In the musical climate in which Rabindranath Tagore became a man in his childhood, both eastern and the western music genres flowed equally. Therefore, just as he took the help of country music to increase his musical repertoire, he has tried to enrich the Bengali music by preserving his individuality by following the music of west where he has been attracted.

If we understand the creation of bengali songs following the western song created by the poet, it can be seen that these songs were written in the early life of the poet. So, the songs written at that time were influenced by western tunes. In particular, the lyric drama "Kalmrigaya" and "Balmiki Pratibhaya" are rich in the songs of the forest goddesses and the many songs of Kalmrigaya are rich in western, scotch, Iris and English melodies. His poetry is able to take people far above this world, one of the purest and most beautiful people. So, the main purpose of his song is to express the juice through the melody. As a result, rhythm is essential in this music, but the melody of music was considered to be the first and main preoccupation. Since, Rabindra Sangeet is a combination of melody, the place of rhythm goes there with the rhythm of the poem. According to Rabindranath Tagore "The work of rhythm in the poetry is the work of rhythm in song. Therefore, the rhythm is the same as the rhythm in the poem, the song will follow the same rules." Tagore's ideology



and aesthetics was an excellent blend of Indian classical, Bengali and Western musical characteristics with a superior writing pattern. (Herath)

### **The solitary path to spirituality through Rabindra Sangeet**

In the warm presence of the Maharishi, Rabindranath Tagore was rejuvenated in a spiritual atmosphere. Therefore, there is a direct and indirect spiritual effect in his entire poetry and in the pursuit of life. After all, he was not only a poet, he was a creator, he was a sage. The influence of Vedas-Upanishads, Ramayana, Mahabharata etc. played a revolutionary role in shaping his mind. The spiritual realization of Rabindranath Tagore is reflected in his literary work, especially in music. He is the bearer and carrier of the eternal truth of India-soul and the spiritual meditative concept of the sage of India and his mature spiritual thought and intense feeling is a signature in his creation of Rabindra sangeet. (Ghosh)

Pooja means offering. Hence all these songs are directed towards the Almighty. There are six hundred and seventeen songs under puja parjaay. **All these songs are further sub-classified or sub-classes into twenty-one upa-parjaays.** They are Gaan, Bondhu, Prarthana, Biraha, Saadhana O Sankalpa, Dukkha, Aashwas, Antarmukhe, Aatmabodhan, Jaagoron, Nihshanshay, Sadhak, Utsab, Aanondo, Bishwa, Bibidha, Sundar, Baul, Poth, Shesh and Porinoy.

The concept of God, the Almighty, as well as Tagore's quintessential celebration of spirituality is expressed with new, enriched dimensions, meanings and nuances in all the lyrics of his songs

in the '*Pooja parjaay*' of Geetabitan. God, his eternal playmate, his beloved and friend and his dear confidante, is a mystical, inspirational entity with whom he celebrates his overflowing love, while also trudging the path of natural oneness with the divine.

Ritual and tradition are also tightly tuned to musical expressions in culture. In this sense, Rabindra sangeet shapes culture. Culture cannot be owned by any individual; culture is collectively shared. Culture is the meeting point for many core values, where people and nations are united by the human spirit. Rabindra sangeet is one way we can record and reflect the history of humanity. Culture is the flavour that spices our recordings and reflections. Cultures have received a spiritual inheritance by adopting music throughout the generations, and cherished their expressions of musical styles identified by their nationhood. Rabindra sangeet can define and identify the sound identity of a culture. It points to the ways in which different faith communities respond to their creeds. Understanding creeds is crucial as religious beliefs will always affect the reality of people's lives and thoughts concerning music. The spiritual climate of the world is governed by individual beliefs. Faith is foundational to any creed held dearly in the hearts and minds of people. Faith frameworks have a spiritual territory observed in places of spiritual significance. For example, places of worship, whether church, synagogue, or temple have spiritual significance to the faith framework they represent. The existence of Rabindra sangeet and spirituality enables our collective consciousness to become increasing more socially and spiritually attuned.



Rabindra sangeet can also be described as being blessed by an abundance of bliss, bringing a state of spiritual joy. Experiencing its songs delivers a delightful feeling of extraordinary happiness and excitement. An ecstatic moment of pure elation can create spiritual fulfilment as the sound of Rabindra sangeet serenades our soul. This euphoric feeling is a complete surrendering of the soul. It sings lullabies that surround us. The sound and sensation are one and have the ability to take us to new heights where the spirit soars. It also shares whispers while it ministers to our spirit in these powerful moments of peaceful solitude.

Something spiritual happens when you download a song into your spirit. Experiencing ecstasy tastes the sweet nectar of spiritual intoxication. Rabindra sangeet is a method of worship. Worship is a state of spirit. Worship begins in the heart and creates a heart connection. Worship is a key to experiencing ecstasy. Ecstasy embraces bliss. It expresses audible emotion and paints a picture evoking an extensive range of human emotions. It is a collective and emotive expression of the heart, body, soul, and mind. Your body knows the music that you love, your mind knows the knowledge that you love, and your spirit knows the values that you love. Peace, love, and unity through body, mind, and soul is a powerful mix. Emotional expressions are distinct from spiritual experiences, being powerful energies delivered through anger, crying, laughter, and love. A spiritual experience is like a fountain of music sourced from the living water well of the soul. Emotional expressions pass through life, whereas spiritual experiences are profound to life.

Spiritual songs can stir our soul to consider eternity and everlasting love. Spirituality can inspire lyrics which have the power to establish themselves as spiritual values in daily living. Lyrics are emotive poetry. Only then can we truly taste the exquisite essence of song with spirit, experienced and expressed as one. The effect is a purely spiritual sound, delivering a supernatural delight.

The new spirituality retains the old magic of the Sufi mystics, the Sikh gurus and Sri Chaitanya, that is, the eternal emotion, love. In a way, Tagore's Gitanjali is also spiritual poetry within its mystic form, as he has identified the Divine in the material universe, the Divine whose love would have been meaningless without the human individual. (Ghosal)

### **World peace through Rabindra Sangeet**

Rabindranath Tagore firmly believe that unless large and powerful nations, aided by their own superiority and vast technological advancement, their desire for territorial expansion, control over smaller nations would cease, world peace could never be achieved. According to the poet, peace can be achieved only when diverse castes and nations develop in their own distinct characteristics. Be free, while all will be connected through the bonds of love to the stem of humanity. He firmly believed that world peace could be achieved only when both East and West met on an equal basis and of equal fellowship. Where knowledge flows in two streams – from the East and from the West and recognized unity of truth. (Kundu)

Rabindra Sangeet is efficient for improving happiness, peace, health and concentration. It evokes the mood of

Individual contemplation of a universal pathos and seeks the resolution of the problem of human alienation in philosophical/spiritual fulfilment through the process of travelling from sound to silence, from loneliness to harmony, from restlessness to peace. Therefore, unity become one. It is an essential sense of human loneliness that serves as the main motive of Tagore's myriad of songs on that is Rabindra Sangeet. (Dasthakur)

Rabindra Sangeet calms the mood helping to bring a calm feeling. The filth of daily life washes away the blackness of the mind and gives the mind an indescribable innocent aesthetic world. The unspoken irritation of the mind can only be alleviated through Rabindra Sangeet. Because, it is a special art emanating from the deepest province of the mind, i.e. the language of the deepest feelings of the mind in music.

Rabindra Sangeet includes songs composed on the occasion of nature, love of country, puja and various ceremonies, as well as innumerable songs suitable for the establishments of the essence of poetry and drama. Rabindra sangeet also spread the message of peace all over the world with the help of its different parjaays mainly puja Parjaay. Rabindranath Tagore realized this divine power of music and added it into teaching of life and the formation of life.

The ups and downs of the ongoing life of the poet, the special feeling and feeling that the footsteps of the Father of the Universe felt in himself, is an everlasting achievement in the terms of various ideas, language and melody. It is known as the puja stage songs of Rabindranath Tagore that this puja is not

just a dry cover of devotional worship, it is not a dedication to the world of kalpa for self-improvement, it is not involved in any web of sectarianism or formality. This worship is for the great philosopher's own Life-God, in various colors dedicated to the Supreme Being of humanity. (Dutta Choudhury)

## Conclusion

It is a result of Rabindranath Tagore's penance that Rabindra Sangeet has the power of different prajaays, songs with beautiful meanings, emotions and feelings, festival songs, Baul, Kirtan and spirituality through which the message of peace spreads in the whole world. Rabindranath Tagore has also introduced several new rhythms suitable for his songs. Rabindra Sangeet is flowing like a slow-moving stream to meet the ocean of world music.

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