



Swaranjali Music School

स्वरांजली संगीत शाला

www.swaranjalimusicsschool.com

Visharad Poorna Theory

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Chapter 2: Essays

1. Current Problems of Music

(Music's Present Day Problems, Music's Current Difficulties, Current Issues of Music)

Music is one of the fine arts (Lalit Kalaa, genteel arts). Similar to other fine arts, music also faces many difficulties during its evolution. We can divide these difficulties in three groups.

1. Problems in Music Education, 2. Performance Problems, 3. Other

a. Problems in Music Education

- Guru - Shishya tradition has disappeared. (Guru – Shishya tradition is where shishya or students moved in with the teacher and his family and lived with them for 10-12 years to learn music). Now there are private music schools. Some universities also offer Music as a subject and grant degrees up to Doctorate. As a result, more students are learning music, but the quality of music skill acquired by these students has decreased. The students who only depend upon music schools are not becoming high ranking performers.
- Usually there is one teacher and many students in a music school or university music class. Hence teacher's time and talent or skill is divided between many students and students do not receive teacher's full attention.
- Running a music school is expensive and hence schools have to charge tuition fees. Some students may have musical talent, but may not have enough resources to attend the music school. They will miss out on learning this ancient art form.
- There are very few books available for a given syllabus. Music schools do not have well equipped libraries.
- Universities employ professors for teaching vocal and instrumental music, however, they do not hire Tabla players for regular practice (riyaaz). As a result, students are weak in performing with adequate tempo and beat (Laya and Taal).

- Music professors have 'net' and Ph.D. degrees. These degrees are primarily written exams and many times the professors are not experts in performance part of these fine arts. Such professors are unable to inspire students to tenaciously practice and perform.
- Schools lack infrastructure like buildings, parking, library, accompanying instruments and artists (Tabla, harmonium etc.). It is difficult for students to prepare for a good performance when live accompaniment is not readily available.
- There is lack of diligence, tenacity or grit among students. Many students start a music class and quit within a few months or in a couple of years before they become decent singers or instrumentalists. They find other attractions like 'Karaoke clubs' more entertaining. As a result even qualified teachers are faced with teaching basic lessons over and over to many new students while very few of them will stay and study until they become good performers.
- Music is primarily a performance art, but currently it is mired in exam system.

b. Concert Performance Problems

Vocal or instrumental concert performance styles have not changed in last 50-60 years. Other audio visual fine arts like literature, stage plays, and movies have undergone massive changes and improvements in presentation that enhances the enjoyment and appreciation. These improvements are not seen in music fields. Hence there is very little progress in performance style and concert arrangements that makes it more accessible to general population that may not have studied classical music.

Lyrics in composition are outdated. People do not agree on the utility of the words in classical music compositions (bandish, khyaal, taraanaa, dhruwad, dhamaar). Primarily, a performer presents classical music with aalap, boltaan, taan, sargam etc. Artists hesitate to use any other component while performing music for fear of criticism. It is possible to create entertaining performance through story telling and emotional performance with just swar presentation (no words). However, it will need some experimentation that is currently lacking.

Presenting gentle, pleasant, slow swar compositions is becoming less popular. Aggressive, fast percussion based performances are gaining popularity. Tablaa is basically an accompanying instrument, but now tradition is emerging to make it a solo instrument.

Khyaal singing is not appreciated by today's audience and a performer is required to pay attention to people's changing tastes. Hence concerts with khyaal singing are reducing in number.

Students need a well-equipped stage to exhibit and judge their art forms. Amateur student performers do not have access to a proper venue. Big concerts are organized for famous artists, but emerging new artists have a tough time to gain foothold or get opportunity to perform in public on stage. There are no private or government institutes that organize concert performances for new emerging artists.

Many emerging new and child artists are attracted to television competitions. Music schools are busy completing the syllabus for each exam. Arranging monthly or weekly recitals for students to perform is getting increasingly difficult for school administrators.

c. Other Obstacles

Obstacles for Students:

- It is hard to find a suitable place or time to practice music in a home and other places are not readily available.
- Music libraries are not accessible
- Visiting scholarly speakers who can knowledgeably talk about music are few and far between. Hence students have very little general knowledge about music.
- Tickets for famous performing artists' concerts are expensive and poor students are often deprived of observing and listening to these great performers.
- Sometimes students do not receive proper advice about whether they should study vocal or instrumental music.

Obstacles for Teachers:

- Teachers teaching in private music schools often have financial problems.
- Big universities that receive grants from government have professors that are considered worthy of receiving national honors. Teachers in private schools who are lifelong diligent teachers mostly go unnoticed.

Obstacles for Artists:

- If performing in small towns, good accompanying instruments are often not available and it is difficult to carry your own instruments.

Obstacles for Music Field:

- The rapport or support that exists between other academic institutes, is not observed within the music schools or institutions.
- Music activities need more exposure through announcements, analysis, research, literature, publications, concert arrangements etc. Music activities are mostly ignored or neglected in today's busy lives.
- Many Ph.D. thesis that are written every year, but very little research is documented that is truly useful for music.
- There are two types classical music in India: Hindustani and Karnaatak (North Indian and South Indian classical music). There is very little interaction, collaboration or interchange between these two styles.
- Classical music concerts often do not have good auditorium and when they do, ticket prices are too high.
- Private schools that are tirelessly teaching and spreading music do not receive support from government.
- 'Insync' is the only TV channel devoted to classical music.

Despite these difficulties, classical music has evolved and flourished for thousands of years and it will continue its journey forward.

2. Relation Between Rasa and Laya (Flavor and Tempo)

In broad sense, flavor and tempo are an inherent part of our daily life.

Rasa (Flavor) is related to physical tastes like eating and drinking. In our daily lives as well as in fine arts, 'Rasa' has an essential place.

Laya (tempo) exists in every molecule of the universe. Consider – sunrise, sunset, day-night cycles, seasons' regular entrance and exit circle in a year, all living creatures' activities. They all have a certain laya or tempo. Along with these daily or yearly inevitable and ordinary occurrences, fine arts that are at a different level, also have laya in them.

You notice an inherent laya (tempo) in the lines of a sketch or painting or in the dialogues of a play. When a sculptor has studied the subject carefully and created the sculpture with proper proportions, it is said that the tempo of the sculpture is accomplished or you can see a beautiful 'laya' in the sculpture. Laya is evident in the structured verses of a poem.

In conclusion, the words 'Rasa and Laya' are both used in reference with fine arts.

Let us think about definition of 'Rasa and Laya' in connection to vocal and instrumental music. Human beings have some emotions that are eternal. This is called instinctive emotions. When any human's mind is influenced by his/her surroundings, these instincts take over and they are reflected into 'Rasa' or enjoyment of senses. Nine 'Ras' are described in literature. Romance (Shrungaar), Peace (Shaant), Dire (Roudra), Laughter (Haasya), Pathos (Karuna), Heroic (Veer – Brave), Bhayaanak (Scary), Abhorrent (Beebhtsa – Hideous), Amazing (Adbhut). When these feelings (Rasa or flavors) are realized, people can enjoy pleasures obtained from fine art forms.

All nine rasa are not available in music. Pathos, Romance, Peace and Heroic are four 'Rasa' that are useful for music. In literature, words and their interpretation are useful in realizing the feelings, while swar and laya are two factors that are available in music for depicting feelings. Ancient music scholars said that shruti (swar) is the mother and laya (tempo) is the father. When human voice comes from throat, language also becomes an important factor. That is, swar-words and laya-taal are used to enjoy the feelings evoked by the music. In instrumental music, words are absent. It uses other factors for evoking emotions and enjoyment.

In ancient literature, some theories are discussed about 'rasa' creation through music. For example: Shadja – Rishabh evoke Bravery-amazement-Dire (Veer-Adbhut-Roudra rasa), Dhaivat produces Scary thoughts (Bhayaanak Rasa), Gandhar-Nishaad evoke sadness (karun rasa), Madhyam-Pancham create laughter and romance (Haasya-Shrungaar). In reality, it is hard to imagine creating any feelings (Rasa) with just one swar. It is more likely that feelings will be realized when swar clusters are used in a raag in particular fashion.

Definition of raag is: a particular string of swar clusters that is adorned with swar and varna and entertains the audience, it is called raag. To explain connection of ras and lay with raag: expressing emotions and feelings through music, one can use a raag as a medium. It is important to have 'ras and lay' both to entertain the audience. Raag is entertaining only when both 'ras and lay' are present.

About lay: Ancient book 'Amarkosh' says – 'a steady speed of a taal is called lay'. Taal measures the time, and continuous steady speed of a taal is lay. The book 'Sangven ras.eet Ratnaakar' says a pause after the taal action is called lay. That is the time between two taal actions is called lay. There three types of lay (tempo): drut (fast), madhya (medium), vilambit (slow).

Similar to swar, lay is related to rasa in this manner: Madhya lay – laughter and romance, vilambit lay – scary or abhorrent feelings, drut lay – heroism, dire feelings, amazement.

However, the books do not say anything about the relation of a particular lay with a given ras. They also do not talk about sadness and peace. Hence we have to look elsewhere for searching relations between ras and lay. It does not seem possible to evoke feelings just by lay. Lay may create feelings when it is a part of a vocal or instrumental performance.

Discussion about three types of lay:

1. Vilambit lay (Slow tempo): It is used in a badaa khyaal or maseetkhani gat. Seriousness and depth of aalaap is enhanced with slow tempo. Ustaad Amirkhan's vilambit Jhumaraa in raag Maarvaa is famous for its deep serious aalaap. When you listen to serious raag like Todi, Lalit, Darbaaree Kaanadaa, Miyaan Malhaar, Bhairav, Malkauns in slow tempo compositions, you come to appreciate the true contribution of 'vilambit lay' or slow tempo. In chhotaa khyaal, which has madhya lay in the beginning and drut lay at the end, audience experiences excitement, enthusiasm and self-consciousness. After that, people's feel exhaltation with drut lay or fast tempo compositions like taraanaa or todaa. Ustaad Nissar Hussein khan and Pandit Vinaayakrao Patwardhan's taraanaa are famous for drut layakaaree (fast tempo variations). Pandit Ravishankar ji on Sitaar and Ustaad Allarkhan on Tablaa performed some memorable concerts ending with Drut lay and jhaalaa presentations. Here is where combination of swar and lay (notes and tempo) create great enjoyable feelings (ras).

In reality, ras or feelings create a spark in a raag and makes it alive. Lay has a major contribution to creation of ras or feelings and that is its complete contribution to music.

3. Organizing a Concert

Few decades ago, concerts used to start in the evening and continue till half the night. Those that started at night, finished in the morning. If there was only one vocalist, concert lasted for 3-4 hours. In a big festival, many different artists performed from evening till next day morning. They would sing to their heart's content. There was no limitation on time. Now social conditions and norms have changed. Life styles have changed because of automation. For example, Pune's Savaai Gandharva Festival now stops performances at 11:30 PM because of local regulations.

Now it is common to have two artists perform in four hours. If there is only one artist, he/she may perform one raag with full improvisation, then sing some Jhaptaal-Roopak or Bhajan. After intermission, there is smaller session with natyageet, thumri, some requests from audience and Bhairavee. Concert barely lasts 2.5 – 3 hours. Many times, there is one vocal and one instrumental or dance presentation.

For all this, you need an auditorium, microphone system, seating arrangement. Concert is organized many weeks in advance. In big cities, there can be more than one programs on the same day and audience is divided. This increases the challenges for the organizer.

Keeping all these things in mind, organizer will arrange the concert details as follows:

1. Contracts: Artist and Auditorium

The date and time of the concert should be convenient for the artist. Hectic schedules can be exhausting for the artist and will affect their performance. The organizers should ensure that transportation, meals, accommodation, etc. are arranged for the artists and their team members. The reputation and fame of the artist will define the venue. Popular artists will draw larger crowds requiring larger venues. Artists who are past their prime will attract fewer attendees. They will need a smaller venue. Such concerts will require a sponsor to ensure that the artist or organizer do not incur losses.

2. Scheduling a concert

The date and time of concert are important. It would be risky to schedule it on a day or time when the potential audience can choose from multiple different events. Dates coinciding with major television, movie, sport or political events should be avoided. Concerts in the rainy season can be risky due to weather related issues. For music concerts, morning hours on holidays are most suitable. The concern venue should be in a city or region where music on different styles (classical, semi-classical, light classical, popular movie) is appreciated. During religious holiday seasons, it is not unusual for some audience to leave after intermission. This occurs due to limited time available to listeners who must also manage other duties within the time constraints. Promoting events is essential. A reminder of a recent successful concert by the artists will be a good reminder. Poor attendance is disappointing to the artist, organizer and attendees.

3. Preparing the venue

In large cities auditoriums can adequately provide sound system (e.g. microphones, amplifiers, speakers, etc). However, this may be rendered useless without adequate power supply. One should ensure backup power generation facilities are available. One should test the personal address (PA) or sound system before the event. If the sound does not reach adequately to all locations in the concert hall, the artist and audience will be disappointed.

In small cities the organizer has a much greater burden. They will need to procure, setup, test and operate the sound system. They must also organize refreshments, ensure continuous power supply (with backup generators) and adequate lighting. If the sound quality or loudness is subpar quality, the

walls and roof may have to be covered with sound absorbing panels. The stage should be tastefully decorated using flowers, lights, etc. Promotion is just as important in a small town as in a big city. Finally, the organizers should have staff members to sell tickets, guide attendees, etc. A designated person or team should make sure that travel, accommodation, meals and other needs of artists are met in a timely manner.

4. Sound system

Organizer should discuss the number and types of microphones the artists will need. The discussion should also include the types of stands where these devices will be mounted. Despite careful preparation, it is not unusual to need additional microphones. This can occur due to failure of some devices, or to accommodate additional last minute needs of the artists. Some artists will also need audio mixers with special features, e.g. a monitor speaker.

5. Artists' needs

Artists often invite their personal friends or relatives to their concert. The organizer is requested to provide the complimentary tickets, and also include them meal and refreshments.

Some artists do not carry a Tanpura due to weight and space limitations when they travel from one city to another. They may request the organizer to provide this, along with a local musician who can play it.

Introducing the artist is an important part of the concert. Many times this is provided in a written form along with the program of the concert. One should have this information reviewed and approved from the artist or their manager. Omission of important details or events may disturb the artist and affect his/her performance.

6. Thanking everyone

The concert is concluded by recognizing and appreciating contributions by many. The artists are presented gifts in the form of flowers, shawl, fruit, etc. Sponsors should be acknowledged for their generosity. The volunteers should be thanked for their effort. The attendees should be thanked for their support, time and enthusiasm.

In conclusion, a successful concert requires a team of volunteers and assistants who enjoy music and understand the complexity of organizing the event. It is important to keep them well informed of the event schedule, their responsibilities and appreciation of their devotion.

4. Teacher-Disciple tradition and Modern Educational Method

The 'Guru-Shishya' or 'Teacher-Disciple' style of education dates to the 'Vedic' period that occurred few thousand years ago. Training in music followed the same model. The disciple left parental home and entered the house of teacher called 'Ashram' or 'Gurukul'. The student was looked upon with affection by the teacher and his family. They provided care, meals, housing and also the music skill and knowledge. Student in turn provided services to the teacher and the 'Ashram'. The teacher was considered as God, and given respect accordingly.

Some educators had bigger facilities and received patronage from rulers. Upon finishing the studies, the student returned home to take upon responsibilities in the society. The teacher was gratefully acknowledged and was given monetary or other gifts.

Education was received by listening to the teacher. Since there was no written or recorded form of information, the student had to memorize the teachings.

There was a big change in the society after the industrial revolution. With the invasion, occupation and subsequent rule of foreigner, all aspects of Indian society were promoted as 'sub-standard'. This included languages such as Sanskrit, medicine (called "Ayurveda") and music. As these traditions were lost from the educated and ruling sector of society, music fell under the influence of poor taste. It was associated with those with poor morals, and habits (e.g. drugs and alcohol use).

This downward course of music was reversed by the hectic efforts made by Pt V N Bhatkhande and Pt Vishnu Digamber Paluskar. They brought respectability to music and musicians. Pt Bhatkhande focused on establishing music schools. Among them the Morris College in Lucknow and Madhav Music School in Gwalior are well known. These colleges attracted attention of those also learned English. In 1901, Pt Paluskar established the 'Gandharva Vidyalay' in Lahore (now a city in Pakistan). This was followed by many more schools all over India. In 1931, the 'Akhil Gandharva MahaVidyalay Mandal' was established by his students. The institution and its pioneer started the task of re-structuring the education of classical Indian music and arts. Today, more than 100,000 students benefit from there educational material, teachings and examinations administered all over the world.

The 'Teacher-Disciple' model has changed in the last two centuries. The various princely states offered grants or salaries to musicians. They in turn created new students and their style of music. Students began presenting the style of music created by the teacher, i.e. 'Gharana'. After independence the princely states were dissolved. However, the traditions from those states have survived and flourished.

Today we find two models of music education. Some teachers, with little formal education, are training students in music. On the other hand, many students are learning music along with other skills such as engineering, medicine, commerce. These graduates continue the tradition of the classical music, but also participate in popular music. Some graduates go back to accomplished musicians to further continue their training. The 'Sangeet Research Academy' in Mumbai and Kolkata is providing guidance facilities for such students. They have appointed 'Guru' or instructors that specialize in various styles (i.e. 'Gharana') as well as those who have successfully trained in different art forms. They offer formal degrees in music such as 'Visharad', 'Alankar', etc. We have seen many such artists who have obtained dual degrees, in music and in other branches of education. Notable among them are Pt Ram Deshpande, Dr Veena Sahastabudde. They have helped to continue the Vedic tradition of 'Gurukul' in the setting of the 21st century society.