ISSN : 2349-4654
Naad-Nartan Journal of Dance & Music Volume : 8, Special Issue-Seminar, November 2019

Progress of Vadya-Vrinda through modern times

Dr. Pritam Kaur
Associate Professor, Govt. College for Girls, Ludhiana

Paper recieved on : July 28, 2019, Aug 13, 2019, Sep 15, 2019, March 20, 2020, March 22, 2020, Accepted : March 24, 2020

Abstract

Music inhibits its own universe and is able to blend new ideas to create newer symphonies that encompass the change while keeping its traditional value intact. This harmonious blending of traditional and new ideas leads to a beautiful and pristine whole. Vadya-vrinda is a prime example and it keeps up with the change to remain one of the strongest medium to express human emotions. The experiments to assimilate different instruments together started centuries back and became what we know as vadya-vrinda. The purpose of this study was to understand how vadya-vrinda made a shift from a simple form to a complex and systematized form over centuries. This study was done to explain the progress of vadya-vrinda from ancient to modern periods and establishes that today vadya-vrinda has evolved itself from being an accompaniment art form to an independent and popular art form. Great efforts and experiments were done by the musicologists and performers over different periods to help vadya-vrinda make the big shift from being elitist to becoming populist. In addition, modern evolution from 90s has gone a long way to further strengthen its popularity. To conclude, study shows that Indian music has a vast potential for development along orchestral lines. With our classical and folk music, we can weave into our compositions, a world of emotional, physical and spiritual experience. It also shows that there is lot of scope for further improvement by bringing in systematization tools for vadya-vrinda. Therefore vadya-vrinda is in an enviable position to embrace changes that are yet to come while keeping its traditional values intact.

Key Words : Vadya Vrinda, Tata Kutapa, Nawab Rampur, Maharaja Baroda, Ashoka Hotel Concert Orchestra

Research Paper

Indian music passed through different phases of time. Music inhibits its own universe and is able to blend new ideas to create newer symphonies that encompass the change while keeping its traditional value intact. This harmonious blending of traditional and new ideas leads to a beautiful and pristine whole. *Vadya-vrinda* is a prime example and it keeps up with the change to remain one of the strongest medium to express human emotions. The experiments to assimilate different instruments together started centuries back and became what we know as *vadya-vrinda.*

Vadya-Vrinda: Meaning and Definition

Vadya-vrinda is the word given to the ensemble of instruments playing music collectively in Indian music. The word Vadya-Vrinda consists of two words- Vadya and Vrinda. The word "Vadya" itself is very descriptive. According to Pt. Omkarnath Thakur*: **The word vadya is made up of a dhatu vad which means "to speak" and vadan means "to make it speak"***[1] Vrind means collection or samuha. Hence the collective playing of instruments is known as Vadya-Vrinda.

It is mandatory to review the background of the subject, otherwise the study loses its purpose. Therefore to analyse the progress of vadya vrinda through modern times, let's take a brief glance on the history of vadya-vrinda. Looking back into the complex history of Indian music, it may be inferred that different periods led to such developments.

Historical Background

A systematic study of Indian music may be traced back to

Vedic period. The period throughout which our music was undergoing transformation, stretched over thousands of years and these were the pre-vedic and vedic ages. Musicologists maintain that the ancient music of India is the direct off-shoot of the vedic music. The excavations of Mohanjodara and Harappa proved that songs, dances and instrumental music were prevalent in those times. This is also true that we cannot infer the type of songs or the style of the dances or the way of playing of the instruments. Since all the analyses are based upon the scientific evidence and written records, it is more logical to begin the analysis from the vedic period.

If we go through the historical records of the historical background of the Vadya-vrinda during ancient, medieval and British periods, we can say that various instruments were invented for accompaniment of Vedic music and in course of time, instrumental music ventured to substitute the human voice and some of it became an independent entity. More and more instruments were developed and were then categorized to four different families:

- Tata (Stringed)
- Sushir (Wind)
- Avanaddha (Membrophonic)
- Ghana (Audiophonic)

During the vedic period, there used to be some sort of collective instrumentation i.e. some instruments were grouped and played together on special occassions[2] As the music became an integral part of the society, playing of the instruments collectively became the symbol to express their feelings. But again it was a 'collective instrumentation' and no special name was given to it. Gradually we find a steady development towards Vadya-vrinda. During Panini Period, attention was given to the orchestra bands. They were named as 'Turya'. Before it the same word 'Turya' was referred to as 'instrumentalists' in the epic period[3] Large numbers of instruments during Buddha and Jain period were used in Vadya-vrinda by using different combination of instruments on different occasions. The Vadya-vrinda was more widely used than the preceding periods. As the theatre was getting special attention during Puranic period, the Vadya-vrinda used in the theatre was in more developed form so as to convey the different moods in different situations of the play. Hence before Bharata period, we find scattered reference of the group instrumentation. Systematization of the Vadya-vrinda had not happened till Bharata period.

According to Prajnanananda–"It was Bharata who standardized the assemblage which was named as 'Kutupa'."[4] Talekar describe another version of Kutupa–"As it was mainly used in the theatre, the attention was given to the setting arrangement of the musicians which were placed on the Rangasheersha between the two doors of Nepathya-greha."[5] The Kutupa was specially made for the theatres only. There were other instrumental ensembles which were used during the social and religious occasions but they were not termed as 'Kutupa'.

In the earlier period of medieval times, the theatre was still at its peak. Hence when Sangeet Ratnakar was written during 13th century, Sharangdeva also gave attention to the Kutupa. The classification was same as that of Bharata vis-à-vis Tata, Avanaddha and Natya-Kutupa, he gave further details about the Kutupa. R.K. Shringy said–"The interesting part is that in the Tata-Kutupa as defined by both Bharata and Sharangdeva"[6], the instruments used to accompany the singers. Hence the singers got the prominent place in the Tata Kutupa. But in the Avanaddha Kutupa, the instruments were used independent of singers. Simbhupala further classified the Vrinda into two parts-Kutupa and Kolahala. The most important thing to be considered is that the Kutupa was the name of only one part of the whole group. The whole group was termed as 'Vrinda'.

In the later part of the medieval period, the theatre started declining. Therefore, the Vadya-vrinda was not given enough attention. It became suppressed. The reason was the growing importance attached to individualistic element in music. The other reason was the invasions of the Muslim monarchs who tended to confine music to the royals. The Vadya-vrinda naturally went into limbo.

The term Vadya-vrinda, as it is known today came into existence in the end of 14th century. During British period, the regional forms started taking its roots which helped in reviving of the Vadya-vrinda. During this era, the Indian art and culture did not find any patronage with the British masters. One of its direct implications was that Sanskrit was no longer the central stage of cultural exhibitions. Therefore, lot of development begin to take place at the regional level. The regional thrust helped the Indian music

regains its original impetus. With the rise of small theatrical groups in different regional languages paved the way for the solid foundation of the Vadya-Vrinda. The regional troupes began to stage the plays in different parts of the country which helped them to exchange the ideas. In order to make the plays more effective, they used new dresses, new variations in music etc. With the result, the Vadya-vrinda was rekindled in a new context and environment. With the change in language, the Vadya-vrinda was influenced by the following factors:

- The influence of the western instruments such as Clarinet, Harmonium, Trumpet, Violin etc.
- The songs become more independent of Ragas.
- The western harmony was also being used

The foreign tours of the kings and with the British raj, small orchestral bands came into being which were influenced by the western orchestras.But there were some Indian rulers who tried to orchestrate on the lines of Indian music. The first independent performance is known to have taken place in Bengal led by E.M.Goswami in 1859, assisted by S.M.Tagore and Jitendra Mohan. The main persons behind establishing independent orchestra among masses were Nawab Rampur, Maihar and Maharaja Baroda. 'Maihar String Band' of Ustad Allaudin Khan (though it was influenced by the western orchestra, he exhibited a unique style by using melody) and the 'Baroda vadya-vrinda' which was on the line of the Naubat band during Mughal times, were among the famous Vadya-vrindas. The Nizam of Hyderabad evolved his 'Nizam Symphony Orchestra' which had a permanent German conductor during 1940-48. Symphony orchestras were also maintained in India by the state rulers of Mysore, Darbanga, Patiala and Kapurthala but the Nizam's orchestra was the best musical group and the envy of all princely states.

Vadya-Vrinda made a big shift from being elitist to becoming populist during this period. During this period, S.M.Tagore, Ustad Allaudin Khan, Uday Shankar, Vishnudas Shirali, Pt. Ravi Shankar etc tried to lay out the trends for the orchestra. In the beginning it was technically simple like the whole group performing Sthayi, Antara, Sanchri and Abhog together and then some instruments played the Tanas independently at a given time. Ustad Allaudin starting experimenting with the instruments such as 'Saranga' which is a stringed instrument (bowed and bigger than the Sarangi) to give more bass range and Nalataranga made up of metal rods of different sizes.

Therefore a trend to experiment on Vadya-vrinda to make it technically more complete and a parallel development of new instruments to cover a greater range of octaves started during British period. This trend got enhanced due to the public awareness which come about because of the active role played by media, music societies etc.

Vadya-vrinda during Post-Independence period

The Post-independence period continued the trend towards western orchestra. The first visitor to step down on the shores of India was the London Symphony Orchestra in 1948. With Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime-Minister of India himself leading the list of VIP's to hear the performance, the seal of acceptability for western classical music in independent India was set. In 1953, the first institutional effort to promote western orchestra came with the establishment of the 'Delhi Music Society'.

During Post-Independence period many orchestral bands under the patronage of kings were disbanded. One such breakup of the band maintained by the Maharaja of Patiala in 1942, an opportunity came to the newly established management of Ashoka Hotel in New Delhi to reassemble this orchestra with additional inputs of talents and thus the ***Ashoka Hotel Concert Orchestra*** was created in 1955-56.[7] The prime mover of this idea was Ms. Daulat Nanawati who was the head of the department of western music in AIR Delhi. She collected the volunteered members of the disbanded Patiala orchestra and selected musicians from Mumbai. She also recruited some European musicians and established the hotel orchestra consisting of 22 members. The orchestra led by S.N.Gulati was helped by the management of Ashoka Hotel to go to Holland to be trained in composition and conducting.[8] He remained with this orchestra as its leader and conductor until 1979 when the orchestra was disbanded because by now public taste for music in Delhi was becoming more populist.

With the changing structure of society and hectic pace of life, the average listener was now finding it difficult to spare time for lengthy concerts. This resulted in the change in presentation method by the musicians. Before independence itself the experiments in the same were

started but mostly the compositions were purely based on ragas and raginis. So in the beginning the musicians were not thinking about the counter melodies or harmonic structure in their compositions. During the post-independence period more frequent cultural exchanges between India and other countries made our artists more open to the ideas of orchestra and started experimenting. The musicians experimented to give vadya-vrinda a colourful and non-traditional look.

The experiments were started with harmony, chord and musical instruments. As this concept matured especially with AIR forming a National Orchestra, it slowly came to change the attitude of the Indian musicians. They realized that the western instruments especially violin and its family could portray Indian music beautifully. They also found that in an orchestra piece where a certain bass quality is required, the Cello and the Double-bass add richness of tone. After this awareness, they started using all the members of the violin family as well as the other types of instruments especially reed instruments.

The Indian musicians also influenced the western world with the traditional Indian music of modal character. With both sides appreciating each other's music, they tried to insert new ideas to create a new concept in Vadya-vrinda called 'Fusion Music'. It was not only a fusion of the instruments but a fusion of different minds. It was a music which was originated and developed in line with the desire of the people of various nativities and civilizations.

Pt. Ravi Shankar experimented with this new kind of music with stalwarts like Yehudi Menuhin, Zubin Mehta. It was the fusion of East and West. One such matured kind of concert of fusion by Zubin was conducted in 1989 in which 130 young musicians took part. The main instruments in stringed section were Violin, Cello, Double-bass and Sitar. Flute, Oboe etc. were in wind section and Kettle drum sets, Bass-drum, Tabla etc. were the percussion instruments. The orchestra played compositions by Beethoven, John Strauss and Chaikosky followed by Raga-Mala on Sitar by Ravi Shankar along with Violin, Harp and other stringed instruments were used to give counter points. Then there was a dialogue between different percussion instruments and Tabla. It was a brilliant composition having the fusion of the Indian and the Western music.

Ravi Shankar also experimented by creating a fusion between Hindustani and Carnatic music e.g. he presented a 'Tala-Kacheri'**.** The main attraction was the Tala of Carnatic music system and the Raga of the Hindustani music system. The instruments were Mridanga, Ghatam, Ganjira, Tabla, Sitar, Sarod, Shehnai and Violin.

There were other great music wizards like Dr. L. Subramaniam who was creating waves in the music world by attempting Indo-Jazz fusion in the 70's. He draw on a wide range of influences, from Carnatic music to Jazz to Western Classical.. He defined this as 'Neo-fusion' and called it ***"a combination of complex polyrhythms with an Indian melodic flavor and western harmony laced with improvisations.***[9] He wrote 'Fantasy on Vedic Chants' for Indian violin and orchestra**.** He evolved a new musical language which has been hailed as a perfect synthesis of the East and the West.

Audiences generally like to hear something new. Therefore they are open to new experimentation in art forms. This encourages musicians to show their talents and creativity by way of new experiments which in turn helps spread awareness about the performance of new instruments which were earlier unknown to audience. Today Vadya-vrinda is beginning to open up in two forms–

- As an accompanying art-form.
- As an independent art-form.

Changing trends in Orchestral (Vadya-vrinda) Componenets

(i) Vadya-vrinda Compositions

Vadya-vrinda, as an accompanying art-form flourished with other performing arts such as operas, ballets, theatres at regional level, films etc. and the latter performing independently. As mentioned earlier, operas and theatres were not unknown to India. They indirectly promoted the growth of Indian music and Vadya-vrinda. One owes modern ballet in India to Uday Shankar. Though he himself was not a musician, he understood part that could be played by orchestra to bring about a wonderful picturesque in ballet. He took the services of the noted musicians such as Allaudin Khan, Ravi Shankar, Vishnudas Shirali, Timirbaran to create a great score for his ballets. These maestros concentrated their efforts on rhythm, melody and the sound effects. For this purpose, they used musical instruments like Manjira, Jhanj, Jaltaranga, Tanpura, Sitar,

Sarod, Sur-bahar, Ektara, Bansuri, Khol, Mridanga and Tabla. The results were so lively that orchestra itself could portray the theme independent of ballet. Uday Shankar was an orthodox where the musical instruments were concerned[10] He was hesitant to include western instruments (even the violin) but sometimes he used the Gongs and the Gamelan of Indonesia. Some of the famous ballets he presented are: Labour and Machinery, Rhythm of Life, Shankar Scope, Buddha etc.

Timirbaran's orchestras got a distinct place with the intermingling of the East and the West. His various orchestral compositions are Tagore's Hungry Stones, Megh Malhar, Peace Symphony etc.. Ravi Shankar also made his impact on dance-dramas like Amar Bharat, Discovery of India, Samanya-kshati.

In 90's Ananda Shankar, son of Uday Shankar, was the guiding force behind Indian ballets. He believed in the fusion of Indian and Western music. He had also created independent orchestras which mainly were thematic compositions (very few in classical music), The main features were beats, harmony on western lines, western musical instruments such as piano, piano-accordian, organ, different types of drums, flute, violin, sitar, israj, tabla etc. He even used choirs wherever it suits the theme. Some of his famous orchestral compositions are: Jungle Symphony, Mamta, Streets of Kolkata, Lovely Rider, Togetherness etc.

Orchestras gained a lot from ballet. There were great many innovations that took place in orchestral compositions. Many musicians started classifying the compositions for vadya-vrinda purposes into many categories in order to give a total effect. Vishnudas Shirali has classified the compositions as:

- Thematic Composition
- Classical Compositions
- Thematic/Non-thematic Motiff
- Rhythmic Motiff
- Choral Orchestras

Pt. Ravi Shankar[11] classified the orchestral compositions into four parts:

- Classical
- Light Classical
- Folk
- Thematic.

These classifications helped the composers to create beautiful compositions such as:

- Symphony of Seasons (Vishnudas Shirali)
- Chintan or Chetna (Vishnudas Shirali)
- Gaon ko Gori (Ravi Shankar)
- Buddha Jayanti (Ravi Shankar)
- Rhythm Indiana (Chiti Babu) etc.

The different ragas used for the classical compositions were Sri, Yaman Kalyan, Jhinjoti, Prabhakali, Gara, Tori, Bahar, Malhar etc. With the classification of the compositions, a need was felt for the notation which could help in preserving and maintaining its originality for the times to come.

(ii) Use of Notation

The Notation system as in use in India today is not perfect for Vadya-vrinda, if we take into account the Bhatkhande and the Digambar notation system. Existing systems of writing the score had not dealt with the subjects of technical expressions as adequately as in the west, although subtle technical aspects and expressions were also in the Indian music. But neither of the prevailing systems had any suitable signs for instrumentations namely krintan, akarshan, apkarshan, open and muffled voice, plucking, bowing, tempo, kampan etc. Nikhil Ghosh tried to give accuracy to the notation by making all the signs of ornamentation, instrumentation, expression, tempo-signatures etc.[12] He adopted different signs from the staff notation, Tagore's notation along with his own. But it had not gained the popularity. Staff Notation is widely preferred in Vadya-vrindas due to its accessibility**.**

(iii) Varieties of Musical Instruments in Vadya-vrinda

Indian orchestration requires a careful and elaborate study of their own musical instruments, so that it is possible to select from different tonal values and different octave ranges, as Dr. Narayana Menon pointed out that '***without losing identity or cramping our national spontaneous expression... but it should strike along new paths and not get marooned in little island of orthodoxy'***.[13] Apart from the general quality of the instruments, it is essential at least for the purpose of Vadya-vrinda that the instruments to be used in this must be tuned to a particular pitch to give out notes perfect in texture and pitch. The frequent tuning of the instruments is bound to affect the fittings of the instrument and its quality. This important

factor of group instrumental music has to be carefully attended to. According to Vishnudas Shirali," ***Tuning the instruments to admit a change of key and to a particular pitch, and the removal of symphathetic strings of the instruments may be necessary in order to fit in with the requirements of such an orchestra"***.[14] New combinations in Indian Instruments as well as Indian and Western were tried. Many folk instruments were revived. Many new instruments were invented like Saranga, Nala-taranga etc. As we know that Indian music does not have enough reed instruments. So some of the western instruments like clarinet, oboe, horn etc. have also been included in Vadya-vrindas, as they are suitable for Indian music. With the emergence of new musical instruments with captivating tone-colors, the modern orchestras are able to give richer, substantial, colorful and charming performances.

(iv) Use of Harmony

There is no orchestra without harmony. But if the harmony is used in western style, then the Indian music will not be able to retain its own identity. Many experiments were tried and tested. The melody took a new role. Many composers such as Vishnudas Shirali tried a new type of harmony. He tried to create harmony by forming a sort of counter-point achieved through the superimposition of melodic passages with different group of instruments. A number of minor melodies were placed in the composition in addition to the parent melody having all the characteristics of the parent melody but still possessing a distinctly individual quality of their own. Till date, the composers are producing amazing compositions by using the western harmony and chords best suitable for Indian orchestras while retaining its own fragrance.

Conclusion

Conflicts between the new and what is considered as traditional trends in music existed in every other form of art. From such conflicts emerges a fresh type of art based on the traditional system but embracing, assimilating and giving shape and form to the new trends. Therefore, orchestration in Indian music could be permissible and possible because of the growing need. Indian music has unlimited potential for development along orchestral lines. Music with its notes, forms, emotions, expressions and a highly developed science, conveys deeper meaning of human struggle, happiness, joy and variety of moods. The orchestral music should be treated as an independent media of expression and should be allowed to grow along with the traditional aspects. Given the proper scope, understanding and opportunities for development, with active support from private, as well as the public- sectors, it can blossom into an extraordinary medium of expression with its infinite scope for variety and progress based on materials accumulating through the centuries.

References

1. Thakur, Onkarnath, Sangeetanjali, Vol. 2, Chaukhamba, Varanasi, 1962, p. 42.
2. Pranjpae, Sharatachandra Sridhar, Bhartiya Sangeet ka Itihas, Chaukhamba, Varanasi, 1986. p. 32.
3. Vaidya, S. Sankshipta Mahabharata. Virat 61-34.
4. Prajnanananda, Swami, A Historical Study of Indian Music, Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi, 1981. p. 97.
5. Tarlekar, G.H. 'Paper-design Seating Arrangement of Kutupa during Bharata times, Sangeet Kala Vihar. Vol. 7, July 1964
6. Shringy, R.K. and Sharma, Prem Lata.{trans} Sangeet Ratnakar, Vol 2, Munshiram Manoharlal, Delhi, 1989, p. 212-223.
7. Times of India, 20 May, 1990.
8. Personal Interview with Late S.N. Gulati in 1994.
9. Indian Post, 23 June, 1988.
10. Ghosh, Dibyendu. {ed.}. The Great Shankar's Uday Ravi. Agee Prakashan, Calcutta, 1983, p.34.
11. Garg, Laxmi Narayana {ed.} Ravi Shankar ke Orchestra, Sangeet Karayalaya, Hathras, p.2.
12. Ghosh, Nikhil, Fundamentals of Raga and Tala with a New System of Notation. Sangeet Mahabharati, Bombay, 1978. p.71.
13. Holroyde, Peggy, The Music of India. Praeger Publications, New York, 1972. p.252-253.
14. Sangeet Natak Academy, 36, April-June 1973.