INTRODUCTION

India has produced Peerless personalities in every walk of life. Sri Guru Nanak Dev is one such prominent personality of the medieval period of Indian history. He came during a dark period when Indians were being ruled over by the Muslim kings. That was a period of great social, political and spiritual crisis in the history of India. According to eminent scholar, Dr. Ajit Singh Pental, "If we cast a glance at the conditions prevailing in the 15th century, we realise that it was an age of extreme disorder and commotion. The Muslims, who had been ruling the country for four to five centuries, considered themselves superior to their subjects. Hindus and Muslims were bitterly opposed to each other and the masses were made to suffer heavily. Guru Nanak came as a saviour to the suffering humanity. He was loved and revered both by the Hindus and the Muslims alike, as is stated in the following proverb:

Guru Nanak Shah Faqir
Hindu Ke Guru, Musalman Ke Pir.

He was acclaimed as 'Pir-i-Hind in the Muslim world abroad and his name still stands inscribed as Narrat Rabbi-i Nalid Baba Nanak Faqir Aulia on a memorial in Baghdad."


He was not only a great poet, but also a great musician who contributed immensely to Indian music. He was a great social reformer as well as a spiritual thinker. He was of the considered view that if the thoughts enshrined in Sabhada were conveyed through the medium of music, the impact on the minds of the listeners would be everlasting. He, therefore, composed his entire Bani basing it on various Raga, which have the power to produce Amrit, the ecstasy. He harnessed music as a medium for the welfare and spiritual uplift of the society. From the three characteristics of fine arts i.e. Satyam, Shyam and Sundaram, it is quite clear that the aim of Art - whether it is poetry, painting or music - should be the welfare of the society. In this respect Guru Nanak's position is unique in history. But it is surprising that the musical aspect of the personality of Guru Nanak Dev and his Bani has received scant attention from the high priests of academic pursuit.

Much has been said and written about his life, poetry and philosophy. His Bani has also been fully discussed to describe its poetic value and its the great musical quality has been acknowledged as well as appreciated too. But it is a pity that until recently, very few has taken care to discuss music as the originating factor of Bani consequently Gurban-Sangeet has not got due attention and has not been assigned due significance so far.

The main reason for this lack of interest in Gurhant sangeet is that most of the scholars and the historians were not fully equipped with the knowledge of music and the music and the musicians equipped with the practical knowledge of music were not scholars of literature. While discussing Guru Nanak's contribution to Indian Music, it seems necessary to define the term music. According to Sharang Dev, music, is comprised of three elements, i.e., singing, playing upon the instruments and dance. Among these three components, singing has priority over the remaining two; the second i.e., playing upon the musical instruments comes under singing; while the third one i.e., physical dance is not permissible in Gurhant sangeet. But about the dance of the inner mind, it is written in Gurhant:

Dance, O my mind before thy Guru

and

To abide in celestial beatitude in his exhibiting his dalliance. Such a dancer is born not again

Guru Nanak Dev added new dimensions to the Indian music to retrieve its lost glory. Music was synonymous with the court music. It had lost touch with the masses. It was dominated

4. Sharang Dev, sangeet Ratnakar, (ed) by Shrivastave, H.C.
5. Guru Arjan Dev Ji (ed.) Sri Guru Granth Sahib, Amritsar- 1604,
   Rag Gujri, Mahal 3, p. 506.
6. Ibid., Rag Rambali, Mahal 3, p. 688.
by low standards of morality and was degenerating into sensuality. Gradually it came to be used for cheap entertainment purposes.

Guru Nanak Dev regained for it lost glory of the Vedic-Age by composing his hymns in different ragas and talas. He preached through the medium of music. At that time two traditions of music were in use. The first was *Maaroor Sangeast* while the second was known as *Deel - Sangeast*. It was *Maaroor Sangeast* was beyond reach of common masses because it was bound in rigid rules and the *Deel - Sangeast* commonly used at that time had become degenerated and was being used for obscene and purposes. Guru Jee made a singular contribution to its uplift. His message was addressed to the common people, so he adopted the middle path of combining *Deel Sangeast* with *Maaroor Sangeast*. Guru Jee formulated a new tradition in music which is known as *Gurbani Sangeast*. He composed 976 hymns in thirty-seven ragas. In this way, he not only restored to music its old glory and respect which it had enjoyed in the Vedic - Age but also rejuvenated it. This is really Guru Nanak’s unique contribution to Indian Music.

Before Guru Jee, a number of poets and saint-musicians like Surdas, Kabir, Tulsi Dasa, Meeran and others had composed and sung their hymns in different ragas. But their singing was mainly personalised and individualistic. Swami Hari Dasa, who spent most of his time in forests, composed 120 *Pados* in 12 different ragas. Out of his 120 *Pados* 18 are pervaded by
idealism while the remaining 110 Padas are imbued with Shringar - rasa. He was indifferent towards the mundane matters pertaining to the common problems of the society and its welfare. Nor was he in contact with the common masses. But Guru Nanak's whole life was dedicated to the betterment of society. Babar's attack on India provoked Nanak's sensitive mind to say -

"So much beating was inflicted that people shrieked Didst Thou, O God, feel not compassion".

It was only Guru Nanak Dev who dared raise his voice against the tyrants of the times -

"The dark-age is the scalpel, the kings are the butchers and righteousness has taken wings and flown".

Guru Nanak Dev recognised the value and power of music. He used it as a medium for the welfare and spiritual upliftment of the society. With the help of the infinite power of music, Guru Jee became successful in transforming the policies and views of scholars and kings and metamorphosed the devil incarnates like Sajjan Thug, by singing

9. Ibid., Rag Mijh, p. 149.
hymns as –

"Bronze is bright and shining, but by rubbing, its sable blackness appears." 10

Guru Jee evolved some new ragas like Tukhari and Majh and intermixed various ragas like Parbhati - Ribhas, Basant - Hindole to enhance their impact. These ragas are not found in the ancient and the medieval works on music. Guru Jee brought these ragas into practice. He introduced some new types of some prevailing ragas like (i) Gauri - Dakhni, (ii) Wadhana - Dakhni, (iii) Bilawal - Dakhni, (iv) Ramkali - Dakhni, (v) Maru - Dakhni and Parbhati - Dakhni.

At the time of Guru Nanak Dev Indian music had been divided into two traditions 11 First was the Northern Tradition of Music known as Hindustani Sangeet and second was Southern Tradition of Music known as Karnataka Sangeet. During his Wassies (long travels) Guru Jee visited southern states of India. Some Scholars are of the view that Guru Jee composed his compositions (hymns) in the ragas of Karnataka traditions of music. That is why he wrote the "Dakhni" word while assigning headings to his compositions. But as a matter of fact in the books of Karnataka music of that time these ragas are found nowhere. Guru Jee sang in the raga prevailing in Hindustani tradition of music and the word Dakhni means the South side of Northern India at that time.

If we make a careful study of the ragas of Hindustani music, we come to know that some ragas were sung with different styles and (names) in different parts of Northern India. The means of communication during that period were not as those of today. Hence the area of Northern India was very vast. Similarly the mode and style of singing a particular raga varied from place to place. Hence the word Dakhni denotes a particular style of singing a raga as it was sung in the southern part of Northern India at that time and not the Karnataka tradition of Indian music. Guru Nanak gave his message to the people in the language of their own region, but he used ragas of Hindustani music because of the fact that the music or the musical notes have a universal appeal whether they belong to Hindustani music or any other tradition of music. This served as a medium for integrating the nation as well.

In Indian music, every raga is capable of producing a particular raga. The saint-musicians of Shakti Movement of the medieval age composed most of their compositions (hymns) in Shant-Raga or Shincar-Raga. Even today in music concerts, we generally hear the compositions producing these two ragas. But Guru Nanak Dev Jee made use of all the nine ragas in his hymns and lent them all a thing of spiritualism. This again is a unique contribution of Guru Nanak Dev to Indian music. A detailed discussion of this aspect has been made in the Chapter Element of Raga or Traces of Raga in Guru Nanak Bani, of this thesis.

Maarco-Sangeet was used for the worship of God prior to Guru Nanak Dev Jee. Desi Sangeet or Folk Music was used simply for entertainment. But Guru Jee composed most of his compositions in local ragas as Meajh, Tukhari, Tilang etc. Some compositions of Guru Jee are composed in ragas based on folk tunes as Aa-Di-Vaar. Other examples of folk music are also there in Guru Nanak's Bani as elehunia, Pati, Vaar, Aarti, Sahih and Baranaha etc. Guru Jee used Desi Sangeet but within the limits of classical music. He brought some folk tunes of local ragas under the category of Indian classical ragas as Meajh, Tilang, Tukhari, Aa etc.

Raga-Regni system for the classification of ragas was in Vogue before the Age of Guru Nanak Dev. Mainly four or five types of this systems were in use. But Guru Nanak Dev never adopted this system. He used the word raga only while giving headings to his compositions. The modern musicians consider Raga-Regini system unscientific and the Thaak system for classification of ragas is used in now a days for the classification of ragas, which was invented by Bhag Khande and developed by Pt. Khare.

Gurmat Sangeet or Gurban Sangeet is a unique contribution by Guru Nanak Dev to the Indian Music. Gurmat Sangeet is a different tradition of Indian music which has its own original characteristics. According to Prof. Tara Singh Jee, "In the presence of the Guru and the congregation,"

when Gurmat is sung in proper 
xxxx and tala in which due 
attention is given to rahan and the number of the stanzas, 
mentioned in the end of each stanza, it leads up to spiritual 
bliss*. This is the definition of Gurmat Sangeet It is 
different from Kiran (devotional singing) too in some 
respects. But it is a matter of regret that neither have 
we delved deep to understand this glorious heritage of music 
nor have our musicians (Kirtankers) tried to maintain or even 
follow it.

The task undertaken by me has proved to be of utmost 
difficulty. First, talking about musical aspect of the Bani 
of Guru Nanak Dev, in itself demands such devotion and discipline 
of mind as is generally found wanting in common man like me. 
As is often said, to understand a great man, one has to have 
little element of that quality in oneself. Although I have 
tried my best to understand the inner impact of the Bani's 
music, yet I am aware of the fact that I have reached 
nowhere near perfection that Guru Nanak and his music is. 
All my efforts are a humble tribute to the name and glory of 
the Ad-Guru.

Secondly, the sources available for my research work are 
quite scant and meagre. Then there remain doubts even about 
the authenticity and reliability of these sources. It is a 
Herculean task to make the research work scientific and 
methodical under this state of affairs. Moreover, except 
very few like Dr. A.S. Paintal, Prof. Tara Singh etc., this

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15. Tara Singh, Prof. Gurubani Sangeet Ate Bharti Sangeet 
(paper) op. cit., p. 1.
topic does not seem to have been taken up and treated thoroughly by the scholars and musicians so far. But I have been able to accomplish this gigantic task mainly due to the enlightened guidance, inspiration and encouragement of Dr. Harnam Singh "Shan" and Late Prof. Tara Singh Jee. I am also very much indebted to them for rendering me their sound advice.

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