CHAPTER I

INDIAN MUSIC

(From the Vedic Period to the Fourteenth Century A.D.)

THE VEDIC PERIOD

Indian music was in vogue eight or nine thousand years before the birth of Christ and at the time of Indus Valley Civilisation (2800 B.C.-2000 B.C.)\(^{16}\) It was at its Apex. This is evident from the statues found after digging the old ruins of Mohenjodaro and Harappa.

During the Vedic Age, people understood the depths of music. The following four Vedas were composed during that very Age:

i) Rig Veda.  
ii) Sam Veda.  
iii) Yajura Veda.  
iv) Atharva Veda.

All these are musical in their form. Sam Veda is entirely musical in its setting. Pt. Delip Chander Bedi tells that during the Vedic period not only three viz. \(\text{Jhad}, \text{Anvad} \text{,} \text{and Swarit} \) but seven \(\text{swaras} \) were generally used for singing the Ved mantras contained therein.\(^{17}\)

During that glorious Age, all the three components of music i.e. singing, playing on musical instruments and dancing were also fully developed and practised accordingly.

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It was generally considered that if tales were narrated through the medium of music, they would yield better effect on the minds of the audience, as do the martial songs on those of soldiers during the war time. Music was also used for the general welfare of mankind. It was a popular medium for worship leading to attainment of God. The musicians were given due respect in society. Primarily, Brahmans were the custodians of this fine art.

2. **THE AGE OF RAMAYANA AND THE MAHABHARATA**

The epics of Rama and Mahabharta were written during 500 B.C. to 500 A.D. Both are poetic in their form.

Maharishi Balmiki, the author of the Rama, was expert in vocal music. The epic contains references to his teaching music to Luv and Kush, the sons of Lord Rama. Thus the teacher-taught tradition in the teaching of music had begun by that time. Moreover, the emphasis of music had shifted from the individual to the congregation. On festive occasions, people sang in chorus. Music was also patronised by the State and the nobles (rajas and maharajas). Ravana was himself a great pundit (expert) in music.

Lord Krishna, called RamaVana (a flute master), was the hero of the Mahabharta. During that period, Karna-Kand was losing its grip and its place was being taken by Gyan (Knowledge / learning) and Bhakti-Kirtan (devotional singing). Arjuna belonged to this Age. He was adept in

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19. Ibid., p. 31.
veena-vedan. In this epic we find the use of *swara* and references to *Gandharvam* along with the *swara* harmony in music.

3. **THE PERIOD OF JAIN AND BUDDHA AGE**

In India, Vedic civilisation and religion had been at their peak for about two thousand years. The Brahmins, who were scholars in Sanskrit and mainly they were the custodians of this art of classical music and they reserved it to their caste only.\(^n\)

Lord Mahavira and Buddha showed light and founded Jainism and Buddhism respectively. Lord Mahavira was born before Lord Buddha. He formulated five laws for *swara-sadhana* in music. The vocal music with the accompaniment of ladies underwent a great development during the period of the Buddha. People in general, clearly understood classical music. *Thari-Gatha* is a collection of meaningful songs,\(^b\) sung by the Buddhist nuns.

In Jainism, music has got an important position in their certain festivals. In these festivals, the music of dance is of unique position. Jain Poets have used *ranya* and


tales in their compositions.\textsuperscript{22}

\textit{Natya Sastra} is one of the oldest treatises on the art and science of music and acting. It is the base book of modern Indian music. This too, is the creation of this period. It is considered to have been written in about five thousand B.C.\textsuperscript{23} The last six chapters i.e. from twenty-eighth to thirtieth of this book are devoted to music. In these chapters we find detailed description of seven \textit{swaras}, twenty-two \textit{shruties}, two \textit{drums}, fourteen \textit{mochhhanas}, eighteen \textit{Jatis}, \textit{Jati-leshaana}, \textit{Jati-gayan} and twenty-two kinds of tales.\textsuperscript{24}

4. \textbf{THE AGE OF THE GUPTAS}

\textit{Dattilema}, a treatise on music, written by Dattil, the son of Bharat is considered to have been written during the reign of Chandra Gupta. He propagated all the theories given by his father except the definition of \textit{Mochhhanas} which is not given in his book i.e. the Natya Shastra. The existence of \textit{Gandhar Gran} only is found in his book which is contrary to the version of \textit{Natya Shastra}.\textsuperscript{25}

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22. Narula, (Dr.) Darshan Singh, \textit{Sangeet Vishardara},
Maiote - 1986, pp. 80-81.


Mathera - 1960, p. 27.

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After Chander Gupta, his son Samundara Gupta ascended to the throne. Music made a lot of progress in his period. Whenever he returned after conquering any land, music concerts were held to express joy and happiness. Sitar is considered to have been introduced during his period.26 The Arabians also admired the Veena-vedan of Samundara Gupta. There is a book of poems written in 1749 by an Arabian writer bearing testimony to the fact that Samundara Gupta was a great veena player. This book is still available in the stocks of the famous library of Istanbul.27

Samundara Gupta himself wrote and composed many songs which were highly appreciated by the then famous veena player, Hari Sen. Ragas and tansenas were also practised in this period. Music was divided into two parts:

I. Classical Music.

II. Lok-Sangeet (Music of the masses).

This period gave birth to many types of folk songs and folk dances.

Chander Gupta Vikramaditya ruled during the period 375 A.D. - 380 A.D.28 He was a patron of music and honoured the musicians. He got compiled various systems of music. He was a past-master in veena-vedan.29 By that time

27. As quoted by Khosla, Bharti Sangeet Da Itthas, op. cit., p. 71.
28. Khosla, Bharti Sangeet Da Itthas, op., cit., p. 73
India had developed contacts with many European countries. So Indian music reached countries like Italy, France, England and Hungary during his time. Kalidas was also enjoyed in his patronage. Majority of the learned persons in the field of music are of the view that Matang Muni too belonged to this age. He wrote a treatise on music named Brihaddevi which forms the basis of the present and past granthas (treatises) on music. He also introduced Kinri-veena. The fixation of frets (nadas) on veena too is his invention.

Lateron, he increased the number of frets from fourteen to eighteen. The word raga for the first time was used by him. Another treatise on music Nadiya Shiksha, composed by Narad also belongs to the same period. It deals with the asvarg of Sam Veda. Both the grama and degi traditions have been fully explained in this book. Narad discussed three grama, twenty-two moorchanas, seven grama-ragas in this book.

5. THE AGE OF RAJPOOTS

During this age, India was divided into many small states. Most of the time of people was consumed in warfare and infighting among the Rajpoot kings. The musicians of this period kept the art of music to themselves and did not pass it on to others which proved detrimental to the advancement of music. The Geet Govind by Jaidev was written during this age. This work has a unique place both

in literature and music. Some paintings of \textit{Ragan} and \textit{Rupanig} of this period are also available. Prithvi Raj Chauhan was himself a great veena player. The Muslim invasions on India had also started by this time and some of the Muslim rulers had got themselves entrenched on the Indian soil.

6. \textbf{THE MUSLIM PERIOD}

The internal strifes among Hindu Rajput kings made it easier of the Muslim invaders to set up their rule over India. The result was that the soul of Indian culture and music was mutilated.

Allauddin Khilji ascended to the throne in 1296 and ruled up to 1316.\textsuperscript{32} He was a man who took some serious interest in the development of music and during his period Indian music once again regained some of its lost glory. Thus by the time of Mohd. Shah Rangila, circumstances had become once again favourable for the progress of music. Amir Khusro, who was a famous Persian poet and musician, belonged to this age. He was the first musician to introduce \textit{Kwali}. He also invented \textit{Kaul} and \textit{Irana}. He was the founder of solo \textit{Sitar Vedan}.\textsuperscript{33} Gopal Nayak was also his contemporary.

We cannot ignore the contribution of \textit{Yadavas} of the South to music. The famous \textit{Sannaat Gargee Ristrakar} is a product of this age. Sharangdev was the author of this

\textsuperscript{32} Kholer, \textit{Sharti Sannaat De Itthis}, op. cit., p. 78.
book. Various aspects and terms of music are fully explained in this book. Ghias-ud-Din Tughlak ruled from 1320 A.D. to 1325 A.D. He was the first king of the Tughlak dynasty. Mohd. Tughlak succeeded him. He was a lover of music but music did not make any progress during his regime. The impact of Muslim culture on Hindu culture was no doubt characterised by great developments.

The chapter sums up the history of music from the times of the Vedas to the fourteenth century A.D.

34. Khosla, Bharti Sangraha and Itihas, op. cit., p. 83.