

The Gurukula System of Indian Classical Music

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ABSTRACT

Ancient Gurukula system was the only effective medium to receive training or practical 'Taalim'. The system means the continuous propagation of teaching-learning process through Guru-Shishya Parampara (Master-Disciple Tradition). This is a priceless heritage and most effective education system of Indian Classical Music.

Keywords: Gurukula, Talim, Classical Music, Hindustani Music

Music has the power to arouse the heart and it has the potential to express the moral and spiritual sentiments to the highest degree. It is not only the medicine that can cure an aching heart but also it helps a spiritual aspirant to raise his soul to the Almighty. That's why the ancient sages have sometimes christened it as Nada-Yoga and God as Nada-Brahma. Music has almost always allied itself with religion and spiritual values. The Culture of a society depends on the culture of the individuals comprising it, as also the relationship they have among themselves. In fact, nowadays we are quite familiar that, Music has its immense power to make good health in body and mind of the human-being. Moreover, it has the power to motivate the animals and the trees too.

Indian Classical Music, which is established by the involvement and effects of the Ragas of various times of the day and night and the seasonal variety, is continuously spreading its calmness throughout the World. The proper renditions of the Ragas, being sung or played, are able to decrease the agony of mind and can heal up their pains of the body too. Apart from these, the Classical Music makes one to have an unconditional patience and eagerness to listen it continuously without any fatigue. Moreover, especially Classical Music enhances one's imaginative power and power of concentration which is too much helpful to Art and Culture. Even it develops discretion and discrimination of a person, so that the right decision can be taken at the right time within the limitations imposed by the circumstances. Perhaps, only Classical Music can work upon the study of Science, Philosophy and Logic at a time. One should start with greater and

more intimate association with one's own family members. This closeness can be acquired very easily with the help of Teaching-Learning process of Music through the indoor-games organised with the various aspects of Classical Music, both in Vocal and Instrumental.

The Classical Music is not just a combination of the divine in melodic terms. The essence of the Ragas must manifest in a slow unravelling a gradual disclosure that will raise the artiste to a level of sublime and thrill by the huge acceptance of the audience of their society. This is an art exquisite and the artiste is the rare figure who can attain the height and the depth of *sadhana* (the dedicated innovative non-stop practice that leads to eventual excellence) with the light and the life of the notes. The royal secret of good human-relationship with others is unselfish love and genuine consideration for the needs and feelings of others. The universality of Indian Classical Music can assure to feel one for a cultural and refined individual, making him or her easily succeeded in his or her effects, being in peace and harmony with the society.

Indian Classical Music, in any form, is always to be learnt directly from the Guru. Still now the educational system of Music is the result of the trio exclusively at the Gurugriha (home of the Guru): the Teacher, the student and the contents along with the methods. Actually, a Spiritual-Teacher is generally called 'Guru' or 'Acharya'. They were expected to be learned in the Vedas and allied scriptures. As applied to other fields of knowledge, it could mean that he should be an expert both in theory and practical. A Guru stands for a noble and wise character with earnestness to teach and a genuine love towards the students. On the other hand, a student means one who has eagerness to learn, humility, obedience to the Teacher, self-control, absence of laziness in the pursuit of knowledge and willingness to do personal service to the Teacher. These were the essential traits a student was expected to possess to qualify for admission.

The aforesaid detailing can only be described in the context of ancient Gurukula system of Indian Classical Music. If we look upon the history of Indian Music, there are Samaveda or Samagana which were taught by the sages. There were so many learners who were dedicatedly learnt their lessons under the guidance (Taalim) of their Gurus. Moreover, those disciples used to live at the house of the Gurus or the nearest to his house in order to receive the uninterrupted Taalim. Sometime, the Ustads (the Muslim Gurus) were also engaged with a very strict taalim to their disciples (Shaagirds). Actually, in the ancient and mediaeval periods, almost all the Gurus practised two-types of Taalim:

(a) Khaas-Taalim : Only the sons and son-in-laws were selected by the Gurus.

(b) Aam-Taalim : The general students were allowed to achieve this.

The special –Taalim was given by the Gurus out of their conservativeness only to their nearest family-members. Thus, the rich and detailed-Taalim is not to be received by the talented and prosperous disciples. The stream of Taalim of the Gurukula system was very tough to achieve for both the talented and general students because of the daily hard tasks as well as the rigid life-style which had to be obeyed and maintained throughout their lives. Moreover, many of them had to serve themselves as the helping-hand or as a servant for the whole family of the Gurus. All over the India, once upon a time, the Gurukula system was one and only medium from which Taalims (practical & demonstration based theoretical knowledge too) could be achieved by the learners. Beyond this, many of the students were partially or fully deprived or neglected by their Gurus. Still, this instance is not to be thought that Gurukula system was the curse of hierarchy for the talented but neglected students. A person of narrow-mentality can be a Guru only by his enormous efforts in practice. Hence, he will be, later, a Guru but can't achieve the chance to be a good and broad- minded person. As a result of it, their students had to suffer by neglecting and uninspiring Taalims from their Gurus.

To impart good effect and social education the Gurus kept their students in their houses; and when the number of students becomes larger, these houses would grow into institutions called, 'Gurukula', established by the society. The kings and the rich (being the patrons) generally endowed them with sufficient property and funds, so that they could provide quality-education, free of cost, to all the students. As a result, these Gurukulas or the academies grew to enormous dimensions—both in quality and quantity. Thus, it was fulfilling the significance of their very names: 'Guru' means 'enormous'/ 'master' and 'Kula' means 'institution'. Not only out of necessity, but also as a good practice, the senior and better qualified students were made to teach the novices and also to supervise over their life and discipline. Though punishments for the transgressions existed, they were not very severe. Incurable students were expelled to save the discipline and reputation of the institution. This was the good sign to preserve the system properly with the genuine-training for the next generations. The quality of teaching-learning aspects of this system should be kept flowing and the Classical Music by its nature should be trained and maintained with its own majestic excellence in our great musical heritage.

It is to be noted that, along with the Guru and the Acharya, Upadhyaya is another term that

is sometimes used for a teacher. He is generally described as one who charges fees for his teaching, where as the Guru and the Acharya do not. The Al-Yaman was a famous musical centre in Arabia in the 12th century A.D. by the collaboration of Indo-Muslim Culture. Similarly, a great centre of music was established in India under the inspiration of the great Musicologist named, Sharngadeva and the other musicologists and the musicians in the 12th –13th century A.D. Apart from this, Wazid Ali Shah, who after being driven away by the British rulers of India from his own capital Luckow had to live in Metiaburuj, Kolkata, was the pioneer of Indian Classical Music, especially in Thumri style and a good patron of Indian Music, Dance and Instruments in the area of Classical Zone. He trained a large number of students and talented general people from his own mansion.

The Mughal Emperors like Sultan Mahmood, Alauddin Khilji and obviously Akbar were the names who enriched and gave much support to Indian Classical Music as the patrons and the boosters to his Court-Singers and Instrumentalists. Akbar's taste for the Fine Arts was no less than his love of learning. In the domain of Music, the Hindus and the Muslims were borrowing from one another, each community enriching the other with the precious store it possessed. This process of intermixture was not new in the time of Akbar, but dated from a long time back. The Emperor Akbar was always ready to encourage our Art and Culture and rewarded the authenticity. The promotions of education found its supporters, not in the Emperor alone, but also in the private individuals belonging to the nobility or the middle class.

In the Modern period, our society has the scattered Gurukulas, not like a big one of classical era. Perhaps, the socio-economical scarcity is the cause of that. It should be mentioned that the ancient Gurus didn't charge any fees or any extra-advantage for their teaching, but from the later period, there are the institutions which have the beneficiary target to gain more and more profit, like a business, to admit the less quality students also. Exceptions are always side by side of any system, here it is too. Some quality-institutions are still working hard throughout the India including the four metropolitan-cities (Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai and Chennai). Firstly, the essence of the excellence and the mode of Indian Classical Music are to be felt and to be realised; then it is always to be learnt directly from the Guru. There are so many private, sponsored, autonomous and individual (personal) institutions which make the students well-trained through Gurukula system, in India and abroad, though many of them have their economical-boundaries.

Moreover, our Gurus or the senior outstanding disciples of Indian Classical Music (both in Hindustani & Karnatak Music system) are continuously giving their training to the foreigners and to the NRI through Gurukula system. They give the rewards and awards by the certificates of excellence or gradation after completion of different stages of Taalim to the students. There are so many books to read and to learn about Indian Classical Music by Indian and foreign scholars, but the fact is that one has to learn from the recurring innovative practical Taalims from the Gurus with the patience, dedication, obedience and hard-working. So, no one could learn a little without the practical help and guidance (lecture-demonstration- based teaching) from one's Guru. This concept should be cleared and be followed that Music is fully a practical-based subject and Indian Classical Music is just like an Ocean with an endless amazing dynamic aesthetic richness in it. According to Indian philosophical-thought, Guru is always worshiped as the God. So, it is said:

*Gururbrahma Gururvishnu Gururdevo Maheshwarah,
Gurursakshat Parambrahma tasmai Shree Gurave Namhah.*

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