

Sangeet Ratnakar: The Ocean of Music

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Abstract:

Sangeet Ratnakar composed by Sarangadeva in 13th century is a treatise on Indian Classical music that forms the foundation for both *Hindustani* and *Carnatic* musical style (Ramanathan: 1999: 1). It consists of seven chapters and is also called as *Saptadhyayi*. According to Sarangadeva, *Sangita* is a complete form of art consisting of all the three elements: *Gitam* (song), *Vadyam* (instrumental music) and *Nrityam* (dance). The term *Sangeet-Ratnakar* means the “*Ocean of Music*”. It was composed just before the influence of the Muslims in the Indian culture and hence, it was not affected by Persian language and culture. Sarangadeva therefore gives a description about the amalgamated or blended musical tradition of India before it split into the North and South Indian musical traditions.

Keywords: Sangeet, geet, vadyam, nritya, prakarana

Introduction:

Sarangadeva before beginning his work, gives a brief introduction about himself in the first *prakarana* or the first section of the first *adhyaya*. Then he speaks of his family that had its origin in Kashmir. His grandfather was an Ayurvedic physician and his name was Bhaskar. He shifted from Kashmir to Maharashtra (Devagiri). His son was Sodhala. He lived under the patronage of King Singhana. He was the king of Yadava dynasty, who was the ruler of Deogari from 1210 A.D. to 1247 A.D. Sarangadeva was the son of

Sodhala. Later he speaks of his own learning in a detailed manner. During the time of Sarangadeva, the concept of raga in Indian music had firm roots as and many new ententes had entered or accepted by ample professionals. This is during his time; the music of India had moved far away from *marga* and also from the *Jatis* or class of melodies and two parent scales. It was Sarangadeva who defined almost 267 ragas, by discussing the various components of the past music traditions. Sarangadeva gave weightage to the ever-changing nature of music, that is he gave prominence to the *Lakshya* of music, the music as practiced earlier. But, though Sarangadeva was concerned with the ancient musical tradition of India and its influence of desi tradition, still Sarangadeva was embedded in the prevalent musical practices of his time. And, hence in his *Sangeet Ratnakar*, he not only renders information for the ancient history of music, but also put forwarded theories relating to the current music scenario. In his work Sarangadeva draws his focus on the discrimination between the well-established ancient popular or *purva-prasiddha* and contemporary popular or *anudha prasiddha ragas*. Along with the description of the *ragas* Sarangadeva very elaborately gives interpretation(explaining) of the formation and nature of musical instruments such as- *Veena* and *Vaamsi* (flute) during his time. *Sangeet Ratnakar* is a representation for the ensuing treatises to elaborate on music related topics and performances.

Objectives:

- To study the about Sanrangadeva
- To explore the chapters of Sangeet Ratnakar

Methodology: The research paper is based on secondary source and the datas have been collected from books, journals, audio and videos etc.

Discussion:

Sangeet Ratnakar is the only treatise among all the Sanskrit treatise that is real and analyzed in its purest form. *Sangeet Ratankar* encompasses all the three realms of *Sangeet*- oral music(*geeta*), instrumental (*vadya*) and dance (*nritya*).

“*Geetam vadyam tatha nrityam trayam saneetamuchyate*”

Meaning: *Geet, vadya and nritya*- these three art forms are together known as *Sangeet*.

The term *Gita* is a fusion of *Nada* (sound) and *Akshara* (word composition). *Gitam* belongs to the *Salaga Suda* class of *Prabandha*, composed of two elements- *Pada* (words) and *tala* (rhythm) and have three components or *dhatu*s (*Tri-dhatuka Prabandha*). They are- *Udgraha, Dhruva* and *Abhoga*.

The term *Vadyam*, covers all the three classification of musical instruments such as- various string instruments, different types of drums, and some wind instruments that includes flute, conch, trumpets etc.

The *Nrtya* covers a symphonious combination of the rhythmic limb movements and facial expressions or expressing emotions through *abhinaya*. The dance or *Nrtyam* is expressed in a very attractive way through perceptible and sensory form. The gist of the *Sahitya* or libretto, the vibrant emotional expression to the obligato (performance) of soulful music, and the rhythmic patterns of *tala* and *laya* are being mentioned by Sarangadeva.

The seven chapters of *Sangeet Ratnakar* are:

1. *Svargatadhyaya*
2. *Ragavivekaadhyaya*

3. *Prakeernakadhyaya*
4. *Prabandhadhyaya*
5. *Taladhyaya*
6. *Vadyadhyaya*
7. *Nartanadhyaya*

Description of the seven chapters:

1. *Svargatadhyaya*- The first chapter of *Sangeet Ratnakar* '*Svargatadhyaya*' is divided into eight sections or *Prakaranas* and he classifies the term *Sangeeta* into two sections – *marga* and *desi*. According to him, music was discovered by Brahma and revealed by Bharata is *marga* and music practiced by the people of different regions is *desi sangeeta*. The first *adhyayas*, containing the *Svara* is divided into eight sections called *Prakaranas*. The sections or *prakaranas* discusses the following concepts:

- i. *Padarthasangraha*
- ii. *Pindotpatti*
- iii. *Nada sthana sruti svara jati kula daivata- risi-chando rasa.*
- iv. *Gramamurchana-krama-tana*
- v. *Sadharana*
- vi. *Varnalankara*
- vii. *Jati*
- viii. *Gati*

In the first, second and third sections of this chapter, Sarangadeva has mentioned about the human physiology, *sthanas* articulation of sound- *Hride*(heart),

Kantha(throat)and *Murdha* (head region); three varieties of pitches- *Mandara*, *Madhya* and *Tara*, the absolute principle of *Nada Brahma*, aspects and two classifications of *Nada Brahma*, origin and classifications of *nada*, *ahata* and *anahata*, the breathing style (*prana*) etc. In the *prakarana*, the twenty-two *shrutis* are being mentioned and from these twentytwo *shrutis*, with *vikrit* or modified and *sudha* or pure *svaras*.

In the fourth and fifth *prakarana*, Sarangadeva discusses the three *Gramas*- *Sahdja grama*, *madhyama-grama* and *gandharva grama*, the name of seven *Murchanas* of each *grama* and the *tanas* are being explained.

The sixth *prakarana* deals with the *Varna* and *Alankara*. The four *Varnas*- *Sthayi*, *Arohi*, *Avarohi* and *Sanchari* and the *alankaras* are classified under the four *varnas* are also described in this chapter.

The seventh *prakarana* is known as *Jati-prakarana*, where the characteristics of eighteen kinds of *jatis* are being mentioned. The last *prakarana* or the eight *prakarana* is known as *Gati- prakarana*. The chapter deals with *Giti* and certain musical forms such as *Kapala* and *Kambala*.

2. *Ragavivekaadhyaya*- *Ragavivekaadhyaya* is the second chapter of *Sangeet Ratnakar* which deals with the description of *Ragas* and its classification into two categories: *margi* and *desi*. Under the ten-fold classification of *Ragas*, he has described six kinds of *Marga ragas*- *Gramaraga*, *Uparaga*, *Raga*, *Bhasa*, *Vibhasha* and *Antarbhasa* and four kinds of *Desi ragas*- *Raganga*, *Bhasanga*, *Uopanga* and *Kriyanga*. He has also mentioned about well-established or *purva-prasiddha ragas* and *adhuna prasiddha* or recently established *ragas* and Sanskrit

composition with notation are also clearly mentioned in this chapter. The total number of *ragas* mentioned by Sarangadeva is 264.

The *Gramaragas* in this chapter have been classified on the basis of five *Gitis- Shuddha, Bhinna, Vesara, Gauri and Sadharini*. Sarangadeva also discusses the time theory of the *ragas* that is the performance of the *ragas* is based on specific time and seasons. Though the chapter deals with the *marga ragas*, Sarangadeva gave importance to the ancient *Desi ragas* and a large portion of the chapter discusses about the *desi ragas* famous in the ancient times.

Later, in this chapter he gave a list of eight *Uparagas* and makes a historical survey of the ancient *ragas* of Scholars like Matanga and Yastika. He then catalogued fifteen melodies of generic *ragas* from which minor melodies are extracted. Then he further makes sub-divisions of the melodies and enumerates thirty-four melodies, which was once famous in the ancient times.

3. *Prakeernakadhyaya*- In the third chapter Sarangadeva broadly discusses the qualities of a good singer (*uttama gayaka*) and who belongs to a good tradition (*su-sampradayo*). The qualities that a good singer (*uttama gyaka*) should as mentioned by Sarangadeva are that the singer should have a good tonal quality, who has the patience to practice regularly (*abhasya*), who sings with passion and has the capacity to hold breadth for long, who is well versed in and is well acquainted with the *Ragas, Kriyanga and Bhasanga Ragas* and who can sing the *prabandha* by fully understanding its varied forms. An *uttama gayaka* should also have the knowledge of the nature of a *raga, Shuddha and Chayalaga prabandha, alapti*, mastery of the *gamakas, tala, laya, gati* etc. Along with all the above

qualities, an *uttama gayakas* should have the capacity to retain and hold the attention of the audience or listeners.

In this chapter, Sarangadeva mentions five types of singers- a wise teacher (*shikshaka*), mimicking or imitating another style (*para-bhangya anukarana*), one absorbed in aesthetic delight or aesthete (*rasa-avistastie Rasika*), the entertainer or who entertain the listener (*ranjaka*) and the one who inspires emotions (*bhavaka*) or brings out the sentiment. In the next verse Sarangadeva discusses the qualities of both merits and demerits (*gunas* and *dosha*) of a composer of music, of the *gayakas* (male singers) and *gayanis* (female singers) such as- *Tiripa, Luna, Kampita, Andolita, Vali, Kurula, Ahata* etc. and three kinds of *Yatis*- *Sama, Shrotavaha* and *Gopuccha*.

Sarangadeva also mentions the *Gamakas* and *Sthayas*, in this chapter. He divided the *gamakas* into fifteen types, *sthayas* (components of raga) into ninety-six types and *alapti* into two types- *Ragalapti* and *Rupkalapti*.

4. *Prabandhadhyaya*- In this fourth chapter ‘*Prabandhakadhyaya*’ Sarangadeva explains about the *Prabandha*, a musical form that existed during the ancient period. According to Sarangadeva, *Prabandha* is governed by rules of *rasgas, vrittis, chandas* and *angas*. In this chapter. In this chapter he described about two hundred sixty types of *Prabandha* with its variations.

Sarangadeva classifies the *gayana* into two types- *Nibaddha* and *Anibaddha*. The *gayana* which is constrained with *dhatu*(sections) *angas* (limbs or segments) is *Nibaddha* and that *gayana* which do not have any such bounding is *Anibaddha*. The *Nibaddha gayana* has three names- *Prabandha, Vastu* and *Rupaka*.

Sarangadeva mentions about four divisions of *dhatu* and *antara*, with its six elements of a *Prabandha* song. These thoroughly cover the three aspects of a song- the text, *raga* and *tala*. Next, he discusses the class of *Prabandhas*- *Suddha Suda*, *Salaga Suda*, *Alikrama* and *Viprakirna*. Among these he gave importance to *Salaga Suda* and discusses seven types of *Salaga Suda* songs.

5. *Taladhyaya*- In the fifth chapter Sarangadeva discusses the rhythmic patterns of *tala*. He divides the chapter into two sections *marga tala* and *desi tala*. Under *marga tala* he deals with five varieties: *Caccatputa*, *Cacaputa*, *Satpitaputraka*, *Sampakvestaka* and *Udghata*. While discussing the five varieties of *marga tala* Sarangadeva also mentions about the different elements of *tala* such as *kriya*, *anga*, *jati* etc. according to their practical elucidation. In this chapter one hundred twenty varieties of *desi tala* are also described by the author which are employed in *Prabandha* songs.
6. *Vadyadhyaya*- In this chapter the author mentions about the four types of classifications of the musical instruments-*Tata* (stringed), *Susira* (hollow), *Avanadha* (drum) and *ghana* (solid). Under this classification of *vadya*, Sarangadeva named some musical instruments that fall under this category- *Tata vadya* are string instruments which includes *Ekatantri*, *Citratantri*, *Vipanci*, *Alapini*, *Kinnari*, *Pinaki Vina* etc. The *Susira vadya* or the wind instruments includes *Murli*, *Sankha*, *Vanshi*, *Kahala* etc. Instruments covered with leather or *Avanadhya vadya* includes *Pataha*, *Hudukka*, *Damru*, *Ghat*, *Dundubhi* etc. Instruments such as *Ghanta*, *Shudra Ghantika*, *Kamsyatala* etc. fall under the metallic instruments or the *Ghana vadya* category. Along with the classification of

the musical instruments, the author has also mentioned about the construction or structure and the techniques of playing the same

7. *Nartanadhyaya*- In the seventh chapter Sarangadeva talks about the elements of dance and this chapter is known as *Nartanadhyaya* or *Nrutyadhyaya*. It is the longest chapter and contains about 1672 *shlokas* or verses. Sarangadeva has classified the chapter into two sections. In this chapter Sarangadeva discusses the third component of *Sangeeta* i.e. *Nartana*. *Nartana* includes *Nrta*, *Nritya* and *Natya* which is categorized by King Someshvara author of *Manasollasa* and is followed by Sarangadeva. Though the chapter is named as *Nartana*, it actually deals with the concept of *Nrta* and *Natya*.

The chapter *Nartanadhyaya* deals with the famous verse related with the *Abhinaya Darpana* of Nandikeshwara.

“*Angikam Bhuvanam Yasya*

Vachikam Sarva Vangmayam

Aharyam Chandra Taradi

Twam Namaha Saatvikam Shivam”

Meaning: We bow to that pure Shiva whose body is the whole Universe, whose speech is the entire language and whose ornaments are the moon and the stars.

Sarangadeva classifies dance as *marga*(classical) and *desi*. While describing the *marga* tradition Sarangadeva follows *Natyashastra* and other commentaries and most of the verses mentioned in this chapter are extracted from the ninth chapter of *Natyashastra*. On the other hand, the explanations about the *desi* class of dance

are extracted from *Manasalloa* of King Someshvara and *Sangita Samayasara* of Parsvadeva.

Sarangadeva defined the *natya*, *nritya* and *nrtta* in a very elaborate manner. *Rasa* is exhibited by *Natya*, it indicates *abhinaya* through which the actors express themselves. Next *Nrtya* is of *marga* class and the *bhavas* are expressed through *Angika abhinaya* and he defines *Nrtta* as the rhythmic movements of the body.

In the second section of this chapter the author describes about the *Rasas* and *bhavas* and he largely follows the theories put forwarded by Abhinavagupta in his *Abhinavabharati*. The chapter consists of the nine *rasas*, thirty-three kinds of *Sthayi bhavas*, eight kinds of *Satvik bhavas*, thirty-three kinds of *Vyabhichari bhavas* along with the definition of *sattva*. After defining the three-fold elements of *natya*, he classifies *Nrtta* into three varieties- *Visama* (acrobatic), *Vikata* (comical dress or comical movements), *Laghu* (postures of *Karanas*). Unlike Bharata, Sarangadeva has classified the *Nrtta* into two kinds- *Tandava* and *Lasya*, where *Tandava* consists energetic and vigorous movements and *Lasya* consists of light and elegant movements. Thus, *Nrtya* is a combination of *abhinaya* or facial expression with the various limb movements. It beautifully presents an attractive visual and auditory form to the accompaniment of a soulful music, *tala* and *laya*.

While explaining the *Angika Abhinaya*, Sarangadeva follows the *Manasollasa* of Someshvara and classifies the *Anga*, *Pratyanga* and *Upanga* that differs from the *Natyashastra*. He has classified the *angas* into six different parts- head, hands, chest, sides, hips and feet. In addition to these body parts, he has also added shoulder as a part of *anga*, which Bharata does not included in the *Natyashastra*.

While discussing about *Pratyanga*, Sarangadeva includes eight kinds – neck, arms, thighs, shanks, wrists, knees, belly and back. He has added knees and wrists which are ignored in *Natyashastra*.

Next while mentioning about the *Upangas*, he classified it into nine categories- glances, eye-brows, eye-lids, pupils, cheeks, nose, breath, lips, teeth, tongue, chin, mouth, heels, ankles, fingers, toes, soles and facial colour.

After the explanation of the *Anga*, *Pratyanga* and *Upanga*, he mentions about the *mukha-raga* or the colours of the face and classified into four types- *Svabhavika*(natural), *Prasanna* (clear), *Raktha* (red) and *Shyama* (dark). He then describes the twelve different positions of the hands, including the three kinds mentioned by Bharata- *Uttana* (facing upward), *Adhomukha* (facing downward) and *Parsvagata* (turned to the sides).

In this chapter, Sarangadeva has mentioned broadly about the positions of the head, the movements of the hands, the actions of the hands and the places for the hands. Next, he discusses, the one hundred eight *nrtta karanas* along with its definition. After the *karanas*, he gave definition of the thirty-two *angaharas* (combination of *karanas*) that are to be used in the preliminaries of a drama. Then he describes the four *rechakas* of the body and *caris*. *Caris* are again classified into two types *Akas acari* consisting of sixteen types and *bhumi cari* consisting of sixteen types. Hence there are total thirty-two number of *caris*. Sarangadeva not only followed the classification of *caris* explained by Bharata, but he also put forwarded the *caris* as thirty-five earthly *desi caris* and nineteen aerial *desi caris*. *Caris* are invariably connected to the *sthanas*, Sarangadeva all together explained fifty-one types of *Sthanas*, that includes six *sthanas* for men, seven for women,

twenty-three desi *sthanas*, nine sitting *sthanas* and six reclining (leaning backward) *sthanas*.

In the next verse Sarangadeva mentions about *Vrittis* and its classification and origins as stated by Bharata. The *Bharati vritti* is said to be extracted from the *Rig veda*, *Sattvati vritti* from the *Yajur veda*, *Arabhati vritti* from the *Atharva veda* and *Kaisiki vritti* from the *Sam veda*. Then explanation about the four kinds of *Nyayas* or ways of using weapons are mentioned- *Bharata*, *Sattvata*, *Varsaganya* and *Kaisika*. Followed by the *Nyayas*, ten earthly mandalas and ten aerial mandalas are being discussed. Next, he arrives at the *Lasyangas* of the desi type. According to the experts on the desi style, there are ten elements of *Lasya*- *Cali*, *Calivada*, *Ladhi*, *Suka*, *Urongana*, *Dhasaka*, *Angahara*, *Oyaraka*, *Vihasa* and *Mana*.

After the description of the *Lasyangas*, Sarangadeva discusses the harmonious combination of the various major limbs, which he called 'Rekha', then he explains about the procedure for practice, qualities, merits and demerits of a dancer, costumes and make-up of the dancer, knowledge and personality of a teacher, the structure, merits and demerits of a dance troupe(sampradaya) and the knowledge of playing various musical instruments by the troupe. In this chapter he then explains the subsequent process of a performance, including the musical ripieno in the pure mode or *Suddha-paddhati*. Then he describes about *Gaundali* and *Perani* dances. These two dances are the most common dances of desi tradition. *Gaundali vidhi* is a *desi* style where with the accompaniment of Salagasuda compositions beginning with Dhruva and ending with Ekatali, the dancer dances with gentle movements of the limbs using *Lasyangas* is called the *Gaundali vidhi*. According to experts, the *Gaundali's* dress is similar to that of Karnataka. Along with the

Gaundali, Sarangadeva mentions about *Perani paddhati*. *Perani* is a dance with the head shaved leaving a small tuft of hair, wearing shining ankle bells tied to the shanks, having a good tone and who is expert in tempo and possess the capacity to attract the audience, and who is also expert in five elements that is -*Gharghara*, *Visama*, *Bhavasraya*, *Kavicaraka* and *Gita*. *Perani* is a dance style that had a long life in the literature of Andhra Pradesh.

Later, Sarangadeva mentions about the various terms related to dance theory such as-Acarya(a person expert in the theory and practice of the triple symphony i.e. dance, song and instrumental music, the *Nata* or actor(expert in four kinds of *abhinaya* and who knows the various types of play), the *Nartaka* or the dancer(well trained in traditional dance), *Vaitalika* (who is well versed in various languages), *Carana* (who knows the vital points of all ragas), *Kohlatika* (clever in rope-walking, clever in using weapons and expert in dancing with a dagger), the qualities of the audience or the members of the assembly, the president of the assembly and the decorations and seating arrangement of the assembly.

Conclusion:

Sangeet Ratnakar is a great compendium of the earlier works of *Natyashastra*, *Dattilam*, *Brihadesi* and *Saraswati-hridayalankara-hara*. Though *Sangeet Ratnakar* reflects the works of these treatises, it is greatly influenced by Abhinavagupta's *Abhinavabharati*. While discussing the *desi* class of dance, he follows *Manasalloa* of Someshwara also known as *Abhijilashitarta Chintamani* and *Sangita Samayasara* of Parsvadeva. In describing the *margi* class of dance, Sarangadeva follows *Natyashastra*.

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