

SANGEETAM-SAMSKRITAM

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In the expression of the subtlest emotions and in the quest for eternal peace, man has been using art since time immemorial. To an Indian artist, all forms of art are manifestations of beauty and this beauty has always been the ultimate truth and divinity. The Supreme Being has throughout been regarded as the creator and lover of beauty and therefore, the aim of all forms of art in India is to attain fulfillment through 'Ananda'(bliss). Accordingly, art forms in this country have been associated with Divine worship; the inspiration is always Bhakti - Devotion to God, and music is no exception to this.

Music has been considered as the finest of fine arts and has always occupied a central place in the imagination of Indians. The range of musical phenomenon in India extends from simple melodies, commonly encountered among hill tribes, to what is one of the most well developed "systems" of classical music in the world.

Language has a significant role to play in the musical expression. Peaks of excellence have been reached by many great maestros in blending sangeetam and sahyam. Samskritam, an ancient and classical language of India, the mother of the Indo-European language family and the vernacular of the first ever and the most primordial literature of the world 'Rigveda'(even before 1500 BC), has been making monumental contribution to Indian music over the centuries.

Patanjali, in his 'Mahabhashya', has enunciated "संस्कृत्य संस्कृत्य पदानि उत्सृज्यन्ते इति संस्कृतम्" meaning it is a 'perfected', 'refined' or 'polished' language. Sir William Jones, the well-known English philologist and student of ancient India, has remarked "The Sanskrit language, whatever be its antiquity, is of a wonderful structure; more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin and more

refined than either”. “Sanskrit language, as has been universally recognised by those competent to form a judgment, is one of the most magnificent, the most perfect, the most prominent and wonderfully sufficient literary instrument developed by the human mind.” says Sri Aurobindo. The corpus of Sanskritam literature embodies a rich tradition of poetry, prose and drama as well as extraordinary and all-encompassing texts on science, technology, Vedic religion, philosophy, medicine, astronomy, art, architecture, grammar, etymology, law, economics, morality and so on. Yet, it is difficult to give an idea of the enormous extent and variety of that literature, which has been growing since the past 3500 years. Research has revealed that the number of ancient Sanskritam manuscripts existing even today amounts to about 10,000, which is more than the whole classical literature of Greece and Italy put together. It is noteworthy that, though ancient and classical, Sanskritam, due its cultural and religious significance, is still used as a medium of expression by scholars throughout India. Such is the grandeur of this language and the marvellous continuity between the past and the present in India, that in spite of repeated social convulsions, religious reforms and foreign invasions, Sanskritam is still the only language that is spoken over the whole extent of the vast Indian sub-continent. An old saying goes “भाषासु मुख्या मधुरा दिव्या गीर्वाणभारती” meaning, it is the sweetest and purest of languages.

The association of Indian Music with Sanskritam is as old as Sanskritam itself. In Sanskritam, music is called gaana, geeti or sangeeta. In the Vedic age, the Samagana method of chanting Vedic verses was in vogue. The Samaganas were possessed of different numbers of notes, registers, metres and literary compositions (sahitya). Musicological rules and other relevant details about Samagana are spread all over in different Pratishakhyas, Shikshas and other Sanskritam texts of that age. Moreover, it is widely acknowledged that the origin of Indian Classical Music can be traced to samagana and, passing through various

stages in the course of its development, it has given way to two styles of music namely Carnatic and Hindustani.

The contribution of Samskritam towards Indian Music is phenomenal. This contributory association can generally be understood from two points of view—

- i. Samskritam treatises on Musicology.
- ii. Sahitya or Patya (Literary compositions) for music

Samskritam Treatises on Musicology:

Musicologists have produced volumes of authoritative works on Indian music and shaped both Carnatic and Hindustani Music to their present day status. Most of these works on musicology are in Samskritam. Different Shiksha, Pratishakhya and other Vedic Texts related to Samagana, the 'Natyashastra' of Bharatamuni, the 'Bharatarnava' of Nandikeshvara, the 'Brihaddeshi' of Matanga, the 'Naradiya Shiksha' and the 'Sangeetamakaranda' of Narada, the 'Sangeetaratnakara' of Sharngadeva, the 'Ragatarangini' of Lochanakavi, the 'Svaramelakalanidhi' of Ramamatya, the 'Sadragachandrodaya', the 'Ragamala' and the 'Ragamanjari' of Pundareeka Vitthala, the 'Ragavibodha' of Somanatha, the 'Sangeetadarpana' of Damodara, the 'Chaturdandiprakashika' of Venkatamakhi, the 'Sangeetaparijata' of Ahobala, the 'Ragatattvavibodha' of Shrinivasa, the 'Sangeetasaramrita' of Tulajajiraja, are a few from a very long list of Samskritam treatises on Musicology. The initial Samskritam treatises on music explained sangeeta as the combination of vocal music, instrumental music, and dance (geeta, vadya and nritya). On the ground of reality, all three are independent of each other; nevertheless geeta subordinates vadya, and vadya subordinates nritya. So, the vocal aspect (Geeta) is predominant and hence the importance of 'Sahitya'.

Sahitya or Patya:

Sanskritam was a medium of Music from a very ancient time. It formed the text part (sahitya) of Vedic music 'Samagana'. The Adikavya 'Ramayana' of Valmiki was itself a Geyakavya. In the Mahabharata and the Puranas, we find many references of music with marga or deshi songs with Sanskritam text parts. Many gatha ganas of the Buddhist text Lalitavistara are in Sanskritam patya. Musicological works in Sanskritam are full of different types of songs with Sanskritam patya. Classical Sanskritam Literature (like the "Abhignanashakuntalam" of Varakavi Kalidasa, the 'Champoo Ramayanam' of Bhoja and the 'Svapnavasavadattam' of Bhasa) comprises of many references to music with Sanskritam patya. We also come across immense Sanskritam hymnal literature (Stotra Sahitya). To name a few, the 'Bhaja Govindam' and the 'Soundarya Lahari' of Adi Shankaracharya, the 'Dwadasha Stotrams' of Madhvacharya, the 'Madhurashtakam' of Vallabhacharya, the 'Mukunda Mala' of Kulashekhara Alwar and many more. The Ashtapadageetis of Jayadeva's Geetagevinda and Lilashuka Bilvamangala's Srikrishnakarnamrita and many other songs are also in Sanskritam.

With specific reference to the composers in Carnatic Music, we come across several composers who have composed in Sanskritam only, as also those who have composed in Sanskritam along with Telugu, Tamil, Kannada and other native languages. We shall take a look at these composers and the use of Sanskritam in their compositions in the coming issue.

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