

ANCIENT GURU – SHISHYA TRADITION / GHARANA

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During the Vedic Period, In India people use to respect and venerate music. The four Vedas namely “*Rig, Yajur, Saam and Atharva*” were chanted by the great sages known as “*Rishis*”. In fact, Samaveda is a mode of chanting the hymns known as “*Richas*” of Rigveda. The Richas of Rigveda are chanted in rhythms is called Samaveda. These Richas arise from the combination of music and poetry. In ancient times the chanting of the mantras were based on “*Swara*” (Sanskrit word that connotes a note in the successive steps of the octave).

According to Shri Sharad Chandra Paranjpe, “It is clear by Brahman and Aranyak Vangmayas that singing samaveda was not restricted only to Sama singers but also other branches singer used to sing”. (Bharatiya Sangeet ka Itihas, Sharad Paranjpe, P. 28). Samaveda holds a distinct place in music. In Sama gayan three types of Swaras are used, they are Udatta, anudatta and Swarit.

Shri Paranjpe mentions that , “In the Vedic age the Swaras were used as consonants and vowels and the musical notes were included in contemporary music. Further divisions of Sama make it clear that all the three Swaras, Udatta, anudatta and Swarit were used in Rigveda (Ibid P.88). He says the seven Swaras also got their independent identity. The seven Swaras of Gandharva received due respect by establishing connection with traditional means. The relation of Sa etc. of Gandharva with the Udatta has been shown with Swaras. (Ibid P.80)

As for learning the Vedas, a Guru is necessary, so to learn music. The importance of Guru Tradition is justified by this statement, “In Saam Swaras there were minimum three Swaras”. A song having one Swar was called Archik. A song having two Swaras was called Gayik and a song having three Swaras was called Samik (Ibid). In due course of time there was a gradual growth in Swaras. For the study of Samhitas Guru is necessary. Similarly for the study of the Samhitas was not possible without a guru. As mentioned in Naradiya Shiksha of Samaveda the importance of an Acharya was realized to learn chanting swara. In fact, books are sea of knowledge but for the description of books, subject – matter and for the analysis of deep myths, a necessity of a scholarly person is expected. After reading the whole book some queries arise in the mind of readers and for the resolution of such queries a guru is required. From here the role of a guru starts and thus the definition of education is explicit.

In the Upanishads the education imparted through Guru – student method is highly ranked. The etymology of the word “Shiksha” is “Shikshyate, Upadishyate yatra sa Shiksha”, means the way or by the mode a knowledge is imparted that is Shiksha. According to Sayan, “Varna Swarad Uchhya Raag prakarao yatra Shikshyate Upadishyate sa Shiksha”, means different Vedic Swaras, (wherein the knowledge of pronunciations of Varnas) that is Shiksha (Ibid. P128)

The importance of Guru Tradition in Music

To get the knowledge of Samaveda, an association of a guru is of much importance. Music learning cannot be achieved with the help of books. To achieve knowledge of swara, guidance of guru is required. In fact, music is a performing art and for that a guru is necessary. Even in the Ramayana period there are sufficient references of Guru Tradition. The poet Valmiki told Lava and Kusha that if Shri Ram asks you, whose children are you? Then say we are the disciples of Rishi Valmiki (Uttarkand Canto 93, Verse 4 and 12)

The glory of a guru is eulogized in every canto of Ram Charit Manas. In the first couplet of Baal Kand the guru is described as: “Bandau Gurupad padam parag, suruchi suvaas saras anuraag”. ||1|| Amiya muri maya Charan Charu Shaman Sakal Bhav ruj parivaaru ||2|| means “ I bow unto the pollen of holy feet of Guru, whose feet being fair, brilliant, fragrant, ravishing and emanatory of devotion”.

Even in the Mahabharata times the Guru tradition was in Vogue. The Pandavas while being in exile for one year Arjun imparted the training of music to the daughter of King Virat. (Bharatiya Sangeet ka Itihas, author Umesh Joshi P. 98)

In the dramaturgy there is mention of Guru Tradition. Acharya Bharat trained a number of students in music and Kohal was the prime disciple. (Sharad Paranjpe, P.323, 462). Even after Bharat many Acharyas maintained the tradition of Bharat. Thus it can be asserted by that time Gharana system was prevalent. In ancient time Shiv – mat and Brahma – mat were lively in music. These two were such Gharanas wherein their own specialties existed in the drama and music field. In Prabandha gayan also there were a number of categories, for instance, Sood, Alikrama and Viprakirna. There were Prabandha varieties which was very popular.

In Pandit Sharang Dev’s book “Sangeet Ratnakar” a number of merits and demerits of singer have been described in Prakirna adhyaya, and for that sampraday word has been used. In the medieval period Banis were much in current.

The different kinds of Dhrupad singing style is called “Bani”. There were four Banis:

1. Gobar haar
2. Dagur
3. Khandar
4. Nauhaar.

The Bani of Taansen was Gobar haar. From this fact, we can conclude that in medieval period’s Dhrupad style, the tradition of Sampraday, Bani and Gharana was continued and it exists till this time.

In Guru–Shishya Parampara discipline plays a vital role. This parampara continued from Vedic period is still alive. The art of music is pragmatic art. Shastra describes the scientific system of

music and following this system of knowledge can be acquired with discipline. Guru Shishya tradition maintained this discipline. An art imbibes a new technique according to time and place and relinquishes the system and thus grows further. To maintain this flow of discipline Guru tradition proves to be successful.

From above said facts, it is revealed that the Gharana system in music emerged as per the prevailing conditions. Just as an individual is recognized in community by his family so an artist also gets recognition by the Gharana to which he is associated.

Music is always learnt with an association of a guru. The guru imparted knowledge of music to his student according to his potentiality. After years of devoted practice the guru used to give the specialties of music to students and by virtue of his excellence the student fostered the art of music. Thus through generations and by Guru Tradition Gharanas of high order used to emerge.

The way an individual reflects some of the qualities of his family in himself similarly, In musical Gharana, student reflects the specialties of his Gharana. The impact of a gharana is also reflected among other persons who were trained in the respective Gharana.

