

EMPLOYMENT OF INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC IN THE PRELUDE TO BHARATA'S DRAMA

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Bharata's *Nāṭya - S'āstram* (N.S'.) is quite elaborate on the Musical instruments that are useful in dramatic sequences . In our present endeavor we just wish to briefly dwell upon the musical instruments which Bharata instructs to employ in the prelude to any drama.

The totality of the stage-performance has been termed by Bharata as *samgraha* that has eleven components like *rasa* , *bhāva* , *abhinaya* , *dharmi* , *vṛtti* , *pravṛtti* , *siddhi* , *svara* , *ātodya*, *gāna* and *rañga* (N.S'.,6/10). Since we wish here to deal with *ātodya* (musical instrument or *vādyā*), we must go for what Bharata means by the term. To him *ātodya* refers to four types of musical instruments like *tata* (stringed instrument), *avanaddha* (percussion instrument) *ghana* (beat instrument) and *sushira* (flute and other instrument produced from bamboo):

ततं चैवावनद्धं च घनं सुषिरमेव च ।
चतुर्विधं च विज्ञेयमातोद्यं लक्षणान्वितम् ॥
ततं तंत्रीगतं ज्ञेयमवनद्धं तु पौष्करम् ।
धनस्तु तालो विज्ञेयः सुषिरो वंश एव च ॥

N.S', is a compact history of these instruments. Bharata gives various norms and modalities for using them at different junctures of a drama. He mentions a sage named Svāti who was instructed along with his disciples for performing on vessel-drum (*bhāṇḍa-vādyā*) during the enactment of a drama (N.S'.,1/51-53). Abhinavagupta (Abhi.) in his *Abhinava Bhārati* (A.B.) informs about Svāti who had prepared a percussion instrument called *puṣkara-vādyā* by studying and emulating various sounds produced through the fall of water-drops on the leaves of lotus. The instruments complimentary to this *vādyā* like *paṇava* (tabor), *mṛdañga* (tom-tom) and *jhallari* (cymbal) were also put to use in the drama (A.B., on N.S'.,1/51).

Percussion instruments were necessary during the planting of the sacred post as a symbol of the beginning of the construction of the auditorium for drama (N.S'.,2/67). Moreover, the war-effects on the stage has to be enhanced in a drama through the use of *mṛdañga* (tom-tom), *panava* (tabor), *s'añkha* (conch-shell) and *dundubhi* (kettle-drum) which generate valorous sounds (N.S'.,3/94-95).

Beat sounds suitable to valorous dance, says Bharata , are actually pioneered by the Lord S'iva. After the vandalisation of the sacrifice of Dakṣa, where His wife Sati plunged herself into the devouring fire of the sacrificial pit, He spontaneously danced according to different

aṅgahāras amidst the synchrony of *mrda'ga* (tom – tom) , *bheri* (kettle-drum), *pataha* (drum), *bhānda* (vessel-drum) *dindima* (small drum) , *gomukha* (cow-horn) *panava* (tabor) and *dardura* (reed – instrument) etc. (*N.S'* , 4/256 – 57).

Dance is a vital part of Bharata's drama. So the stage-performance of a danseuse had to be accompanied by the percussion instruments as well as the stringed instruments (*N.S'*,4/278-79). Since instruments are to be chosen for use as per the requirement of *rasa* and *bhāva* in a drama or in a dance (*N.S'*,34/136-38), percussion instruments have much importance.

However, percussion instruments are prohibited by Bharata in the lyrical song where singing is slow-moving and emotional. But during the employment of *aṅgahāras* beat drums, especially vessel drums are used (*N.S'*,4/282). They are indispensable in the *tāndava* dance (*N.S'*,4/283). There were ancient meters like *Narkutaka* (*N.S'*,32/280), *Khañjaka* and *Parigitaka* (*N.S'*,32/301). They had four *tālas*. Bharata has elaborate norms of employing vessel – drums for them. In the first two the initial three *pādas* are sung without any accompaniment of percussion instruments, but with flute etc.² But the arrival of the last *pāda* is accompanied with hand-clapping and playing of vessel-drums . Perhaps the hand-clapping (*sannipāta*)³ was used by the music director to indicate the start of the playing of the vessel-drums. When the verses of *dhruvā* meter having four *pādas* (*samapādā*) with equal number of letters (*samāksarā*) is sung, the vessel-drum should be played with the index finger only at the end of the *pādas* ⁴.

In this way in the completion of the whole song and its parallel *abhinaya* , the vessel-drum should be played at the end of the last *pāda*. During the repetition of the part (*aṅga*) or subject of *abhinaya* and also during the repetition of a meter based on the count of letters, the vessel-drum should be played (*N.S'*,4/326-27). The beauty of enactment – created by the inter – activity (*antara- mārga*) through the stringed instruments , dialogue-delivery and *karanas* – needs the play of vessel-drum . This instrument is also indispensable in the *tāndava* dance and in the employment of *suci cāri* in the *abhinaya* ⁵.

The nine parts (like *pratyāhāra*) etc. of the prelude section of a drama, says Bharata, should be employed through the playing of stringed and vessel-drum instruments parallel to the dialogues (*N.S'*, 5/8-11) . After this, the curtains are raised for the presentation of dances and of the delivery of dialogues (*N.S'*,5/12)

The word *pratyāhāra* in *N.S'* is a technical term used for the placement of all the musical instruments (*kutupa*) close to the stage as per the norms of dramaturgy (*N.S'*, 5/17). Explaining this Abhinav gupta says that in the middle of the green-room path a *mrdaṅga* – percussionist shall sit facing the east. To his left shall sit the player of *dhol*. On the right side of the stage the singer will sit facing the north. And in the front of him shall sit the lady- singers facing north and south. On the left to the singer shall sit the player of lyre (*vinā*).The flute players shall be seated in other vacant places. Such a placement of all the instrumentalists is called *Pratyāhāra* (Abhi ., on *N.S'*. 5/17).

Before playing the musical instruments, there is a necessity of co-ordinating all of them. This co-ordination is called *ās'rāvanā* (*N.S'*, 5/18). Before playing on the instrument an acquaintative readiness of hand with it is practiced. Such a practice with the percussion instrument is called *vaktra-pāni* and that with the string-instrument is called *parighattanā*. There are many parts in human palms. Trying those parts on the percussion – instrument is called *saṅghotanā*. On the other hand a concert between percussion and string instruments is called *mārgāsārīta*. (*N.S'*,5/19-20). Then follows a process called *āsārīta*. In this process, the instrumentalist

searches for the approachability (*meya*) and approximation (*māna*) in relation to the song culminating with the right adherence to *tāla* – followed by the art *kalā* like assimilation (*āvāpa*) and beats (*apāt*) like *s'amyā* (*Abhi. on N.S'.*, 5/20).

Bharata is thus very elaborate in giving the technical details of the employment of various musical instruments in the prelude to a stage performance. His insight into the placement of instruments and preparation of the instrumentalist is sharp and subtle. All his instructions in this regard are effective in co-ordinating a drama. The variety of musical instruments he refers to is indicative of the rich musical tradition in ancient India and of the science of inventing musical instruments prevalent even before his time. His elaborations indicate the age-old knowledge about the correlations between the musical instruments and specific sentiments or types of poetry. Through out *N.S'* and especially towards the end, we find his useful instructions on music. *N.S'*, thus, can also be regarded as an ancient record of world musicology besides being a huge compendium of dramaturgy and poetics.

NOTES & REFERENCES

1. *Nāṭya-s'āstram (N.S')*, Vol-II, Ed. & Tr. (Hindi) Pārasnath Dwivedi, Sampurnananda Sanskrit University, Varanasi, 1996, Chapt. – 6, verses – 29-30.
2. तावच्च श्रीवंभान्वितं गानम् – A.B., on N.S.,4/324, Vol.-1 (1992) ibid
3. अन्या तु या सन्निपाताख्या हस्तद्वय समायोग शब्द परिच्छेद्या कला तद्गान समये भाण्डवाद्यारम्भणीयम् । A.B., on N.S.,4/324.
4. खञ्जजन्कूर्तसयुक्ता भवेद् या तु चतुष्पदा ।
पादान्ते सन्निपाते तु तस्या भाण्डग्रहो भवेत् ॥
या ध्रुवा छन्दसा युक्ता समपादा समाक्षरा ।
तस्याः पादावसाने तु प्रदेशिन्या ग्रहो भवेत् ॥ - N.S', 4/324-25
5. येऽपि चान्तरमार्गास्स्युः तन्त्रीवाक्करणैः कृताः ।
तेषु सूची प्रयोक्तव्या भाण्डेन सह ताण्डवे ॥ - N.S', 4/328.