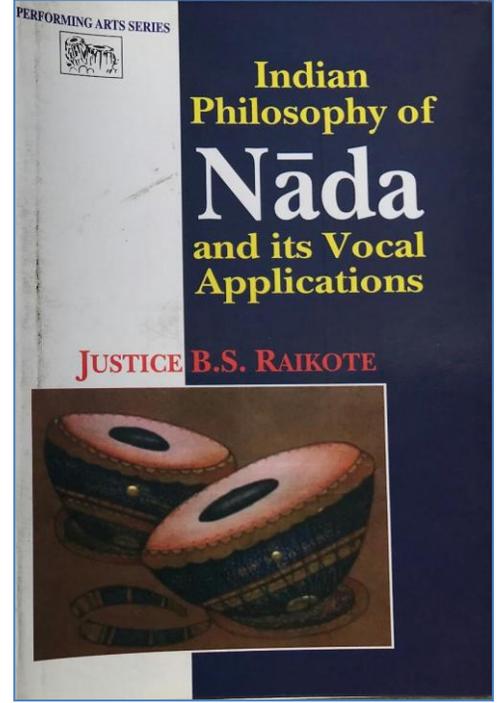


Book Review

Nowadays I am working on musical notes. In last three months I tried too hard to trace the background and origin of musical notes in Indian philosophy and Sanskrit Grammar. A lot many books I had consulted to get the idea of Dhvani, Śabda and Nāda. In the Delhi showroom of MLBD, while roaming around shelves in search of some more books related to these concepts, incidentally I picked up this book (by Justice Raikote) and with natural anxiety opened it to have a look at the content list. Surprisingly, much of the material which I had collected with great efforts till that moment was available in this one book! Though I could not find anything new (in respect of my direction of research) in addition to whatever I had collected till that date but still I bought this book to make other researchers aware about this informative collection to save their precious time. Hence I am sharing my views with the larger academic world regarding this book.



Author: Justice B.S. Raikote

The book is actually the Ph.D. thesis of Justice Raikote from Karnataka University.

The introductory chapter details the need and scope along with the methodology of the research presented. Pre-Vedic and Vedic views regarding vāk, dhvani and Nāda are collected in the second chapter. Vāk is actually the cosmic language from where the human language is erupted following the nāma-rūpa principle.

The chapter three to five deal with the concept of nāda and śabda in reference to six schools of Indian philosophy i.e. Sāṅkhya-yoga, Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta. These schools, to some extent, have conflicting views but the author presented a critical and comprehensive detail of these theories. Sāṅkhya does not use the word nāda but Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika consider the sound as the quality of ether i.e. ākāśa. For this school of thought the word śabda and sound are nothing but the synonyms. Here the Śabda has been categorized as – Dhvanyātmak (physical sound) and Varṇātmaka (syllabic sound). Out of these two, nāda, in view of Naiyāyikās is the Varṇātmaka Śabda (syllabic sound) produced by applying efforts in the vocal organ. Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta consider sound to be the eternal manifestation of the syllable oṃkāra or praṇava. This vocal sound that manifests varṇas is nāda or dhvani.

Tantrāgamas is the reference point of Chapter six. Nāda here is considered as spanda or kriyā. According to this theory, the nādabrahma is the first manifestation of the indivisible śiva-śakti. The mind (jīva) and matter (jaḍa), which are known to be the parallel creations of śiva-śakti, by virtue of their vibrations, takes the form of nāda and bindu.

Chapter seven discusses the views of Grammarians. Grammarians consider two types of sounds - prakṛta dhvani (physical original sound) and vaikṛta dhvani (syllabic-articulate modulated sound) and nāda, they consider as the vaikṛta dhvani.

Chapter eight is about the views of musicologists who consider Kuṇḍalinī śakti to be the cause of nāda. Dhvani or svara seems to be originated from this nāda when the vāyu and agni conjoined with ākāśa (ether).

To make his study more comprehensive, Justice Raikote even included the views of heterodox schools i.e. Cārvāka, Jainism and Buddhism. Chapter nine focuses on these schools. A fair comparison between heterodoxical views and the (previously accepted) ontological views has also been established in this chapter.

Chapter ten compares all the theories discussed in the previous nine chapters. But here special focus is on nāda only. The discussion of dhvani and śabda has been left behind as nāda is considered to be the musical sound by musicologists.

Chapter eleven is about the Vocal Applications of the theories accepted in chapter two to ten. The author considers four types of vocal applications of nāda – Linguistic, Musical, Aesthetic, and Spiritual. All four applications have been extensively discussed. The arguments in support of these applications are taken from the same theories which are established and discussed in previous ten chapters but are appealing to the author as well in his understanding. At times diagrams and pictures are also used to emphasize his arguments. As the book is in black and white print so at places colours are referred in text but could not be noticed in the drawn pictures/diagrams. Here the reader has to apply his/her judgment to get the essence of the discussion.

The author summarizes his thesis in Chapter twelve. In the beginning, for transliteration purpose, presence of a list of diacritical marks adopted in the book ease out the reading of Sanskrit quotes. At the end of each chapter sufficient references in Sanskrit Roman Script are available which may enhance the readership of the book at international level. The book includes extensive references of original texts. Multiple commentaries are referred to while discussing a particular concept. The bibliography given at the end of the book is an exhaustive collection of references for researchers. It may also help new researchers to get acquainted with various available commentaries for the original Sanskrit texts.

On the whole, though the book is not too high in its original content but is good enough in terms of information related to Vāk, Dhvani, Śabda and Nāda. The readers who are not familiar with the Devnagari script and hence are unable to read the original texts available in Sanskrit Language can get enough material about nāda in context of schools of Indian philosophy. Indian Classical Music books in English Language are rarely seen as compared to books in Western Music. Thus this book may be a boon for non-Hindi researchers.

Hence this book is a worth title for musicologists.

About the Author

Justice Basawarajaiah Raikote (born in 1937), learnt music under his parental uncle Rachayya Raikote, an eminent violinist of his time. He completed his M.A. and L.L.B. from Karanatak Universty, Dharwar. Thereafter he practiced as an advocate. He also served as an Hon. Professor and Hon. Principal in a Law College. Later he was elevated as Judge of High Court of Karanataka and Andhra Pradesh. After laying down his office as a Judge, he did his Ph.D. from Karanataka University on “Indian Philosophy of Nada and its Vocal Applications” publishes in the form of the present book.

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