

The Nexus between Music and *Kaśmīra Śaivism*

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Abstract

The interrelation between Vedas and music is well established and celebrated. This should not amount to the supposition that the concepts from Vedic/Nigamic lineage are the only source for deriving concepts elucidated in music theory, particularly the theory of Hindustāni Śāstriya Saṅgīta. The paper presents several principles propounded in Kaśmīra Śaivism which correspond to music. The proposal is to accept and recognize the theories of Kaśmīrī Śaivite philosophy into the mainstream study of music and philosophy of music, rather than only resorting to the ongoing narrative. Also, the philosophy may be better suited for a subject like music due to its shared vantage point.

Keywords: Philosophy of Music, *Śāktopāya*, *Āgamas*, *Kundalini*

Introduction:

Saṅgīta Śāstra-s, especially the theories of *Hindustāni Śāstriya Saṅgīta* and consequently the common understanding of Indian music has been extensively based upon *Vedic* abstractions and philosophies. Broadly speaking, Indian philosophical thought is reckoned to have two streams- *Nigamas* and *Āgamas*. The *Nigamas* represent the *Vedic* lineage. *Āgamas* have pre-classical origins. The *Āgamic* philosophy has come down to us in oral traditions. The three major branches of *Āgamic* texts are *Śaiva*, *Pañcarātra*, and *Śākta*. The *Āgamic* texts have various concepts which are substructures of music such as theory of speech (*Vāk*), sound (*Nāda*), the concept of *mantras*, etc. The philosophy of *Kaśmīra Śaivism* comes under the lineage of *Āgamas*. The paper deals with the theories postulated in *Śaiva-Āgamas* pertaining to music.

The great authoritative texts of music such as *Bṛhaddeśi* and *Saṅgīta Ratnākara* centered their theories on the stage of *Nigamic* understanding of things. Nevertheless, we do find *Āgamic* influences and the use of *Āgamic* terminologies upon closer analysis; of which we find sparse discussion and little to no credit in the field of musicology. It may very well have been the case that theories as borrowed from *Āgamic* philosophy are not given due credit or is majorly unknown due to the bias towards and popularity of *Nigamic* lineage. To bring about the recognition and justice this philosophy deserves, it is imperative to demonstrate concepts

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of music through its perspective. Moreover, it is a discontinuity from the monotony of the subject being spoken about from one perspective.

Musicologists have consensus on the stance that apart from being the most delightful way to attain aesthetic experience music is one of the most appropriate ways to realize the Highest Reality. Hence, they propound the *Nāda-Brahman-Vāda* theory, a corollary of the philosophy of *Advaita Vedānta*. This philosophy is also reflected in the *Āgamic* literatures with some additions but mostly they are brushed aside by the keepers of music. A distinct characteristic of *Āgamic* philosophy is it affirms the world in its fullness. These texts assert that only the acceptance and realization of the immediate can lead us to the realization of the Ultimate; the finite and the apparent cannot be dismissed in our quest for infinite and the real. This is the principal characteristic which differentiates this philosophy from *Advaita Vedānta*. Art forms like the *Hindustāni Śāstriya Saṅgīta* have a similar standpoint, that is; acknowledging the world, celebrating it while beautifying it and then transcending the same.

Before entering into the realm of amalgamation of *Kaśmīra Śaivism* and music it will be helpful to have an introduction of the basic tenets of *Kaśmīra Śaivism*. *Trika-Śāstra*, the non-dualistic *Śaiva* philosophy of *Kaśmīra*, better known as *Kaśmīra Śaivism* establishes consciousness being the only reality. They propound the idea that the Universal I-consciousness, The *Param Śiva* is this entire universe manifested. The *Kaśmīrī Śaivite* philosophers holds the Self to be non-dual with this Supreme I-consciousness. Therefore, the whole vast world is “the glory of your own expansion of being”¹. They advocate the path of realizing the Self for realization of the Ultimate Reality.

There are various ways prescribed in *Kaśmīra Śaivism* for a *Nara* to aid in the process of recognition (*pratyabhijñā*) of one’s true nature as being identical to I-consciousness; as a consequence, to realize the Ultimate Reality. The broad means of spiritual discipline (*upāya*) prescribed in *Kaśmīra Śaivism* which can lead to the highest attainment are: (1) *Anupāya* (2) *Śāmbhavopāya* (3) *Śāktopāya* (4) *Āṇavopāya*. The paper elucidates the theories postulated in *Śāktopāya* to draw parallels with widely accepted concepts of music and to substantiate the manifestation theory of music.

The Amalgamation:

Some of the fairly celebrated theories of manifestation of music is that from *Praṇava nāda-Aum* manifests *svara-s* which gradually manifests in the body as *Vaikharī*. Some accounts affirm that *svara-s* are originated from various animal calls. All these tenets are accepted to emerge from *Nigamic* tradition. To present the *Āgamic* connection to manifestation of music it is important to elucidate some *sūtra-s* of *Śāktopāya*. To begin with, the first *sūtra* of *Śāktopāya* is considered.

चित्तं मन्त्रः (ŚS, II.1)

¹ Lakshmanjoo, “Second Awakening,” in *Shiva Sutras: The Supreme Awakening*, ed. John Hughes (United States of America: Universal Shaiva Fellowship, 2002), 102.

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This *sūtra* employs *citta* as the consciousness which meditates upon the Highest Reality by the means of two fundamental aspects of pure I-Consciousness; namely, *Prasāda Mantra* (*sauh*)- which is the external flow of consciousness (rising from inside to outside) and *Praṇava Mantra* (*Aum*)- which has internal flow (leading to *mantra ma-ha-a*) as well as the external flow (leading to the *mantra aham*). Essentially, *mantra* is not a mere collection of words; it is the divinity within the mind of the *sādhaka*. By means of rigorous awareness one recognizes oneself as non-dual with the deity invoked in *mantra* and eventually with the I-consciousness; then his or her *citta* becomes the *mantra*.

An important *sūtra* of *Śāktopāya* which helps in advancing the subject matter is:

विद्याशरीरसत्ता मन्त्ररहस्यम् (ŚS, II.3)

The *sūtra* claims that the secret of *mantra* is that it is this super I-consciousness that all *mantra-s* are to be directed towards for them to be fruitful. This I-consciousness which is non-dual with the creation forms the basis of all sounds. In other words, all sounds are an expression of the soundless sound that is *aham* or I-consciousness. In its *vimasrśa* aspect (creative aspect) it is termed as *Parāśakti* or *Parāvāk*. The object of contemplation here is *parāvāk* which in itself is subject and is the source of all speech and sounds but is above all speech and sounds. All letters (*vācaka-s*) and objects (*vācya-s*) are contained in I-consciousness in latent form. It is the generative source of all sounds, letters and *mantra-s*; consequently, of music too.

There are innumerable texts on music, poetries by saint poets and other philosophical texts of *Nigamic* lineage which propound the theory that music is a pure manifestation of the God-consciousness. The Divine is believed to be the embodiment of music. Musicologists argue, in the *Nigamic* terminology that whenever we render music or listen to music, especially of a deep-meditative kind; we develop a sense of self-forgetfulness and blissful experience. Supporting the *Nāda-Brahman-Vāda* theory, they equate those experiences, when taken deeper, as culmination in *sat-cit-ānanda* of *Brahman*.

The same can be expressed through the *Āgamic* terminology, the difference only would be that the *sat* and *cit* aspects are same as per *Trika* and therefore, The *Param Śiva* has the *cit* and *ānanda* aspect only. Through *Śāktopāya* we find an evident and direct relationship between the Universal I-consciousness and music. It is one of the purest, primary and non-mediated manifestations of *Parāvāk* or the I-consciousness.

Swami Lakshmanjoo reveals in his exposition of *Śiva Sūtra* while quoting *Sri Tantrasadbhāva Tantra*: “All letters are actually one with *mantra* and those *mantra-s* are one with mother, the energy of Lord *Śiva*, and that mother is one with Lord *Śiva* himself.”². This mother connotes to highest *Śakti* or *anuttara* which pervades the entire cosmos, same as the letter ‘a’ which is symbolic of *anuttara*, pervades all letters. This Divine mother is called *Kundalini*. She gives rise to three kinds of speech (*vāk*): *Paśyanti*, *Madhyamā*, *Vaikhari*.

² Lakshmanjoo, Shiva Sutras: The Supreme Awakening, 80.

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Paśyanti is a form of *vāk* when there is no distinction between the word and object, only vision is there. This is situated in the heart; in this *Ichhātmaka* aspect, she appears to be of one *aṇu*. In *Madhyamā*, the distinction between words and object arises but it is not fully manifested in the realm of utterances. Its locus is in the throat, here, she appears as two *aṇu-s*, this is the *Jñānātmaka* aspect. Finally, in *Vaikharī* she is centered in tongue, consisting of three *aṇu-s* wherein object is completely distinct from the word and this is said to be her *Kriyātmaka* aspect.

The *Kundalini* remains coiled up like a serpent in deep sleep within the *mulādhāra cakra* present inside our body; enclosing *bindu* within herself. This *Kundalini* is awakened by churning of the *bindu*. In this process, the three forms of *Śakti-s* passes between two *bindu-s*: of the churner that is *Śiva* and the churned that is *Śakti* in union. Here, *Kundalini Śakti* is the *Parāśakti* or *Parāvāk* which appears in three ways, viz. *anuttara (a)*, *icchā (i)*, *unmeṣa or jñāna (u)*. Further, these three produces all the nine classes of letters: *avarga, kavarga, cavarga, tavarga, ṭavarga, pavarga, yavarga, savarga, kṣavarga*.

The relation of music to letters is generally acknowledged from the *Vedānga-Śikṣā* (the limb of *Veda* related to phonetics) and the theory of *vāk* is said to have derived from *Rg Veda* and further explained by the philosopher of language *Bhartṛhari*. But here, we find both the theories arising out of single concept thus satisfying the principle of Occam's razor.

Now, in *Bṛhaddeśi* the concepts of *Bindu* and *Nāda* are explained. *Mataṅga* places both, *Bindu* and *Nāda* under *Sadāśivatva*, which shows us the influence of *Āgamas*. We find its connection with *Śaktopāya* as follows: "In the world of letters, *Mātrkācakra*; when creation ends, it ends in its fullness of being, in absolute supremacy, not in its fullness of inferiority. The creative world is found in its supreme state in the state of *Sadāśivaḥ*, represented by the letter 'sa'³, which is also known as *amrita bīja*. At the end of this *amrita bīja*; *praṇa* (life) of *Śiva* which implies *Śakti*, is created. The same is called *praṇa bīja-anāhata*; represented by the letter 'ha' is the gross form of *visarga (ḥ)*. From *visarga* arises *nāda*, as explicated above. *Anāhata* is so called because that letter is not deliberately pronounced rather it is self-pronounced. It does not cease to vibrate within the beings and is also the source of *praṇa* within the beings. When the letters *a* (the first letter), *ha* (the last letter) and *ṃ* (*anusvāra*) are combined in one point, it becomes *aham*, the process is called *aham parāmarśa*.

Similarly, in the popularly known theory of music *nāda* has two-fold connotation: *Anāhata* (unproduced) and *Āhata* (produced). *Anāhata* is the same uncaused, unstruck, soundless sound previously mentioned. This sound manifests in the body with the assistance of *citta* and *prāṇa*, the localization of *Anāhata* occurs in the *Brahmagranthi*⁴. Whereas, *Āhata* is the produced sound present in the gross realm of *Vaikharī*. Also, ancient musicologists second the concept of *bijākṣara* of *mantra* as a representative of the invoked deity that *Āgamas*

³ Lakshmanjoo, Shiva Sutras: The Supreme Awakening, 108.

⁴ "Knot in which the psychic currents of *iḍā* and *piṅgala* join with the central canal of psychic energy, viz. *suṣumnā*, near about the root of the navel." See: Śārṅgadeva, *Saṅgīta Ratnākara of Śārṅgadeva*, trans. R.K. Shringy (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1999), 2.

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explicate. Thus, they believe that in the word *Nāda* the letter 'n' corresponds to *prāṇa* and the letter 'd' to *agni*.

While elucidating the manifestation of *nāda* in the body, *Mataṅga Muni* in *Bṛhaddeśi* mentions five kinds of *nāda*; namely, *atisūkṣma* (very subtle) manifested in the heart-space, *sūkṣma* (subtle) manifested in navel, *vyakta/puṣṭa* (developed) manifested in throat, *avyakta/apuṣṭa* (undeveloped) manifested in palatal region and *kṛtrima* (artificial) manifested in mouth. Whereas, according to *Śārṅgadeva*, the great author of *Saṅgīta Ratnākara*; explains the manifestation of *nāda* in the body in three places viz. *mandra* in *Hṛda* (heart), *madhya* in *Kaṇṭha* (throat) and *tāra* in *Mūrdhā* (head); in each place there remain twenty-two *nādi-s*, from which twenty-two *Śruti-s* of music come into being. The *Āhata* sound can further be classified into two- vocal and instrumental.

Musicologists point out an association between Lord *Śiva*'s five faces and *rāga-s* in *Hindustāni Śāstriya Saṅgīta*. The Eastern face- *Tatpuruṣa* is said to have produced *Rāga Bhairav*, the Western face- *Vāmadeva* was the origin of *Rāga Hindol*, the Northern face- *Sadyojāta* gave rise to *Rāga Megh*, the Southern face- *Aghora* to *Raga Deepak* and the fifth face- *Iśāna*, the face directed towards the sky produced *Rāga Shree*. In addition, Goddess *Pārvatī*, the consort of *Śiva* is said to have created *Rāga Kaushik*.

In contrast to these theories, *Trika* has its own theory of manifestation of *nāda* in the human body which also relates with the five faces of Lord *Śiva*. Many manifestations occur from the Divine mother *Kundalini*, in particular: five sacred states of the Self, which are also known to be the five faces of Lord *Śiva*. Along with these five faces of Lord *Śiva* there are five supreme states of *Śiva*. Of these states, one is an external state that is whole expanded universe, the perceived world by us; the other is the internal state which pervades within our body from our heart up to the skull. This is the *visarga śakti* of *Śiva* which manifests. There are various loci within our body where these internal states are manifested, namely, within the heart, in the throat where it is called *nāda*, between the eyebrows and in *Brahmarandhra*⁵.

It is important to note that along with these ontological and theoretical portions of music, the aesthetics and methodology components of music, that is; the practical portion is also dealt by the philosophers of *Kaśmīra Śaivism*. The great philosopher *Abhinavgupta* and many other such philosophers produced their philosophy of aesthetics which have contributed to the basics and advancement of music and its techniques. Although the aesthetics theories of *Abhinavgupta* are acknowledged and venerated in this field but by far and large the contributions of the *Āgamic* philosophy remain ignored.

⁵ “On top of the head, there is a spot known as *Brahmarandhra*. When a child is born, there is a tender spot where the bone does not form till the child grows to a certain age. *Randhra* is a Sanskrit word, but it is in common usage in other Indian languages too. *Randhra* means a passage, like a small hole or a tunnel. This is the space in the body through which life descends into the fetus.” See: *Brahmarandhra: A Passage for Life*, Isha Foundation, accessed June 14, 2021, <https://isha.sadhguru.org/in/en/wisdom/article/brahmarandhra-passage-for-life>.

Conclusion:

As evident, the temperament of *Kaśmīra Śaivism* and *Hindustāni Śāstriya Saṅgīta* matches and the basic tenets of music can be replaced by *Trika* in lieu of *Vedic* philosophy; it can be argued that *Trika* may be better suited to accept as the bedrock for such a subject. Although the idea is not to altogether get rid of *Vedic* philosophy but either to start tying the knot between both philosophies; if not that, then to break the narrative that music theory solely originates from *Vedas*. The least we can do is to start accepting, recognizing and give credit for the segments we see were directly borrowed from the philosophy of *Kaśmīra Śaivism* and make the philosophy known to the students of music.

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