



Music in Society

History of Indian Music: An ethnomusicological introduction

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Introduction

- Ethnomusicology

Vedas – Ancient Chants

- Vedic language
- “Knowledge”
- Vedic Age, around 2000 to 600 B.C.
- Four primary books

Rig-Veda

- “Praise, verse, knowledge”
- 1500 and 1200 B.C
- Vedic language
- 1028 hymns
- Elite Hindu class of the *dvija* (“twice-born”)
- Only priestly class (*Brahmans*) were allowed to hear these recitations

Indian caste system

- Dictated by the *Vedas*
- Originally determined by ones education
- Later hereditary
- *Brahmans* are the highest caste
- *Untouchables* are the lowest caste
- *Brahmans* are still today the caste typically performing religious ceremonies

Rig-Vedic verse

*One man with utmost care creates the verses;
Another sings a song in chanted meters.
A third, the Brahmin, tells forth the wisdom of
Being,
While yet a fourth prescribes the rules of sacrifice.*

Sama-Veda

- “Melody, knowledge”
- 1000-500 B.C.
- 1,549 verses
- Greater range of pitches are intoned
- *Raga*-related concepts
- Numerology

Atharvaveda & Yajurveda

- Ritual blessings
- 1200-1000 B.C.
- Highly complex and systematic permutation system - *vikriti*
- E.g. *Tabla Kaida*

Atharvaveda & Yajurveda – Tabla Kaida example

- E.g. *Tabla Kaida*

ge na te te ge na dha ge
dhi na ge na te te ge na
dha tira kita dha ge na te te
ge na dha ge tin na ki na

- **Equals**

A B A C

D A B A

E F A B

A C D A

Learning the Vedas

- Verses were only transmitted orally
- Memory-building routines
- Mnemonics, including finger and hand gestures
- *kriya* and *mudras*
- We still witness these in musical performance and yogic practice today

Guru-Shishya Parampara

- *Guru* = teacher
- *Shishya* = student / disciple
- *Gharana* = house / style / school
- *Parampara* = lineage
- Origins of *Guru-Shishya Parampara* date back to 2000 B.C.
- *Upanishads* (Hindu scriptures)
- “sit down near”

Guru-Shishya Parampara – cont'd

- *Guru*
- *Rasa* (mood)
- Time of day or season/occasion

Nada-Brahma

- “Sound creator”
- Mantra “Aum, Shanti, Shanti, Shanti”
- *Upanishads*
- Verse from *Rig Veda*:

The word is measured in four quarters.

The wise who possess insight know these four divisions.

Three quarters, concealed in secret, cause no movement.

The fourth is the quarter which is spoken by men.



Nada-Brahma cont'd

- *The Brhaddesi of Matanga*
- Treatise from 9th Century A.D.
- “That which colours the mind is called *raga*”
- *Nada* has seven *swaras* (notes)
- Twenty-two *srutis* (microtones)
- *Ranj*, which means to evoke a mood, or “to colour with emotion”

Nada-Brahma – Matanga cont'd

- Theory of vibration
- *nibaddah* (“struck”)
- *anibaddah* (“unstruck”)
- A phrase from the *Upanishads*:
Sound is not what one should desire to understand.
One should know the hearer.