

## **SYNCRETISM AND ITS APPLICATION IN NORTH INDIAN RAGAS**

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### **Abstract**

Page | 19

Syncretism is a nice concept whereby, different often contradictory beliefs are combined together and create a new system or practice. It's a process of combining different thoughts and ideas into a new theory by retaining their individual identity unique. Though two or more individual things merged into new form, identity of the particular thing could be recognized. Syncretism took place commonly in religion and cultural aspects as different religious practices and cultural activities have emerged out of this process. Syncretism initially started its function in cultural and religion phenomena but later on it began to spread around every field of education including music. Indian Music has a wide history of its evolution and it has undergone several changes and reached at today's position .North Indian Music specially based on Raga singing which is known as the backbone of North Indian classical music. The history of origin of raga and its later development includes classification of raga, formation of raga, and these are nothing but the results of syncretism .This article encapsulates the aspects like ragas of folk origin, ragas of south Indian origin and the classification of North Indian ragas to exhibit the relevance of syncretism in raga formation.

**Keywords:-** *Syncretism, Cultural, Phenomena, Raga, Melodies, Classical Music.*

### **Introduction:-**

Syncretism literally means amalgamation or blending or mixing of different things to form a new one. The word syncretism derived from the Greek word 'Syncretismos' mentioned in "Fraternal Love" one of the stories of 'Moralia' - a collection of essays written by the great Greek essayist Plutarch . Plutarch used the term syncretism for the first time in 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D., in his essay 'Fraternal Love' to show the unity being established by the process of syncretism. From that period syncretism came into light in each and every field of education or other

aspects. Alike religious and cultural syncretism, musical syncretism also acquires a place in Indian Music as well as in North Indian Classical music. Indian music is very ancient and its evolution dates back to the vedic period (1000 B.C.). Sama veda is considered the musical veda out of the four Vedas and it is believed that the root of all kinds of Indian music lies in the sama veda. North Indian music mainly based on the term raga which is very common to everyone. Raga is a melody, which is produced from the combination of different notes. Every musical sound should be melodious but the distinguishing feature of the raga melody is more appealing than other melodies. An ancient definition of raga is:

” A raga, the sages say, is a particular form of sound which is adorned with notes and melodic phrases and enchants the hearts of men” (Chaitanya Deva, 1937, P.5).

The above quotation explains, raga is the arrangement of particular notes which produces a melody or melodic phrase having the capability of pleasing the hearts of the listeners.

Raga has a vast history of its origin and syncretism occurs almost in every step of its evolution as raga covers different aspects of its evolution.

### **Origin Of Raga:-**

#### **“Ranjayati iti ragah”**

According to Sanskrit scholars raga has been defined as the musical composition which has the quality of ‘ranja’ means to color or delighting the minds of human beings .But it is not like that any musical composition being based on melody will be considered as raga because there are some rules which has to be followed during its rendition.

The medieval Scholar Somnatha in his musical treatise ‘Raga-Vivodh’ has mentioned:-

“Swarnang varno grahansha-nyasadiyukto ganakriyataya bhushita”(Prajnananda,1951,P.150)

Somnatha described when different notes are combined together followed by the das lakshanas and produces a sound which is very emotional and appealing in nature and creates a mood which tinges the minds of men is called raga. The term raga appeared for the first time in the ancient musical text “Brihaddesi”(6<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> century ) written by Matang Muni but it is evident that raga already appeared in Bharat’s Natyashastra (2<sup>nd</sup> century ). Bharat in his Natyashastra ,has mentioned the term raga for 5 times to denote the grama ragas.The root of raga lies in the jati , which is known as the forerunner of raga. Jati in Sanskrit is ‘jan’ means to produce. Jati is the certain arrangement of notes and jati was 18 in number as mentioned by Bharat. The ten lakshanas of jati are amsa, graha, tara, mandra, nyasa, apanyasa, alpatva,bahutva,sadava and audava. The compositions that were sung based on the swara structure of jatis were known as jati raga.The raga has developed from this jati raga as the ten lakshanas and the scales of jati raga have been adopted into the raga itself.

### **Review Of Literature:**

Change is the only permanent reality in music, through which many new styles or forms of music came into existence and got identity. In the same way syncretism allows new styles to emerge and new genres of music to be created. Blending of different things is not the only function of this process but it serves other functions like borrowing and adopting things from different sources.

Syncretism can be observed right from the very inception of raga. The term raga appeared for the first time in Matanga Muni’s musical treatise “ Brihaddesi” and gave birth to different types of it like bhasha ,vibhasha, antar bhasha etc. Brihaddesi of Matanga Muni specially dealt with ‘Desi’ music and different types of desi ragas . These ragas are the basis for all the modern ragas of today.

Matanga Muni in his Brihaddesi has mentioned about ‘Deshakhya’ and ‘Swarakhya’ ragas while describing different types of Bhasha ragas. There are many ragas based on the names of places are mentioned in Brihaddesi. For instance we can see the reference of the raga pulindi, which is the name of a non - aryan race, the kalindi or kalingi raga of kalinga country .There is an great impact of non-aryan music into the aryan music of India,which enriches the repository of Indian music. Takka, Malav, Gurjari ,Saberika ,Andhri, Sorastri ,Saindhavi all

these are the examples of syncretic ragas which have been adopted from different places of India.

Syncretism can be found in different levels of the origin and creation of ragas. With the beginning of Muslim influence in India during the reign of Sultan Alauddin khilji (1296-1315) the famous musicologist and poet Amir Khusrau adopted the Persian muqam and merged it with Indian ragas to form the new foundation of ragas such as Ferdost, Bakhrej, Jhilaf and Sarfarda.

Page | 22

In medieval period (around 15<sup>th</sup> -16<sup>th</sup> century) raga classification came into existence and raga was divided into three categories such as Shuddha ,Salag and Sankirna. The raga classification was introduced by Bhavabhata in his text 'Anup Sangit Ratnakar' .He mentioned 16 types of Nat raga such as, Suddha Nat,Salag Nat, Kedar Nat, Abhir Nat .According to him Kalyan raga had 14 types like Shuddha Kalyan , Hamir kalyan, Bhupali kalyan, Kamod kalyan etc. The author of 'Sangit Parijat' Pt. Ahobal has spoken about the types of Todi raga like Chhaya Todi and Marga Todi. Shaikh Bahauddin Jakriya have started creating new ragas by merging two or more ragas around 12<sup>th</sup> century and he created a new raga Multani-Dhanashree, by mixing dhanashree and malashree raga . The emperor of Jaunpur, Hussain Shah Sarqi mentioned 12 types of shyama raga like Gour Shyam, Malhar Shyam, Megh Shyam etc.

In modern period the concept of transformation of folk melodies into raga melody is affirmed by various scholars, as B.C.Deva has mentioned in his book 'An Introduction to Indian Music' the folk tune played by the snake charmer developed into raga Punnagavarali of south. The folk tunes are the melodies sung by masses with their natural temperament .The same melody is sung in raga rendering with more systematic manner followed by different rules. Folk tunes are prevalent all over India in different geographical areas and the ragas are titled as the name of regional folk melodies are Malwa(Madhya Pradesh), Saindhavi(Sindh), Multani(Multan), Kanhada (Karnataka).In modern period, being inspired by the folk melodies Pt.Kumar Gandharva created few ragas named as Dhun-Ugam Raga for instance, Madhasuraja, Sanjari, Nindiyari, Malawati, Rahi, Lagan Gandhar,Saheli todi.

In 12-13<sup>th</sup> centuries with the beginning of Muslim influence in India, Indian music system divided into two parts as North Indian Classical Music (Hindustani) and South Indian Classical Music (Karnataka). The concept of raga is common in both styles but their rendering is different. There are few ragas which have been adopted and synthesized in North Indian Ragas like Abhogi, Vachaspati, Charukesi, Hamsadhvani, kirwani etc. Abdul Karim Khan, the founder of kirana gharana, popularized some of the south Indian ragas in North Indian music . He not only borrowed karnatak ragas but composed various compositions on them for example, his composition ‘ Banira Rangila’ in Abhogi has won great popularity.

Syncretism occurs commonly in terms of salag and sankirna ragas in modern times . Salag ragas are those in which the impact of other ragas are present like Bahaduri todi , Jait kalyan and Nayaki Kanhara, all these are created by Nayak Bahadur. Tansen had created few salag ragas such as Darbari kanhara, Darbari Kalyan , Darbari Asawari etc.

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