

2. Some Aspects of Musicology

'Musicology' is a word which has come into use quite recently; standard modern dictionaries do not contain this word; it is the Oxford Compendium to music that refers to it and explains its meaning. Considering its recent origin the amount of currency it has gained is remarkable. The word may be taken to cover all knowledge relating to music except actual performance. It has a very wide range and covers topics of great cultural and aesthetic interest. Generally people mean by musicology only the theoretical aspect of music such as the shrutis, mela-scheme, derivation of janya ragas and so on. This is only a minor part of musicology. Let us consider in a general way some of the aspects covered by musicology.

1. *Historical*: As human society evolves its ideas and reactions to outside world also evolve, it gets wider and ever-widening experiences; and so its concepts of right and wrong, beautiful and ugly, justice and injustice also evolve. Of course there are certain fundamental basic truths which are eternal and unchanging. Apart from these our reactions in general to the objective world and our sense of values evolve as our life, our soul evolves. And so music, an effective expression of the soul of a nation, also evolves. The music of to-day is certainly different from what it was in the time of the Ramayana or the Mahabharata; but it has *evolved* out of the ancient basic pattern. Any one interested in the study of human evolution in its various

aspects cannot but be fascinated with a study of the evolution of our musical ideas leading up to the present. A knowledge of this background will help one to handle the present day music in correct form and in right perspective.

2. *Mathematical*: A study of shruti-intervals is greatly helped by mathematics. Also the possibilities of further evolution of our raga system and tala system can be explored with the help of mathematics. Without actually counting one by one we can say how many janya ragas of a given pattern can be derived from a scale. In tala manipulation it is mainly a matter of arithmetic, but aesthetic considerations limit our choice. An elementary knowledge of permutations and combinations will be of benefit in this line of study. Just as a problem worked at a desk by a scientist led to the discovery of the planet Neptune, it is quite possible that some purely mathematical relation may suggest some new possibility in the field of music. Mathematics and music have gone hand in hand in ancient Greece. Plato insisted on a knowledge of music and mathematics on the part of any one who sought admission to his school. Similarly Pythagoras laid down the condition that a would-be pupil should know geometry and music. I frequently refer to the three 'M' s. Music, Mathematics and Mysticism; music and mathematics together lead to true mysticism.

3. *Scientific (Acoustics)*: Music is based on sound and a knowledge of sound from a scientific standpoint will be an advantage. For a performance to be completely effective several factors need to be considered and utilised. Voice production (of the kind required for the particular system of music in view) can be done scientifically *more* quickly than otherwise. The concert hall has to satisfy certain conditions if the music performed is to come out at its best.

Especially in dealing with musical instruments and their structure some scientific knowledge comes in handy. A knowledge of the quality of the material used, of the principles underlying *resonance*, of the laws of vibrations of strings and air-columns and such other matters is very valuable. Of course some people deal with instruments in an empirical way, but a scientific approach will save time and ensure correctness.

4. *Geographical*: Some persons may wonder where geography comes in here. But a little thought will explain the point. It is a well-known fact that climatic conditions of a place have a great influence on the voice and the materials used for instruments. It has been observed that in certain areas the voice has a natural tendency to be nasal; the climate at times influences even vocal inflexions. The languages spoken in these areas bear the stamp of this climatic influence. Similarly in some climates the average voice is subdued, soft and mellow while in some other places it is bold, vibrant and forceful. This is an interesting branch of study which it is worthwhile to take up for serious research.

5. *Psychological*: All fine arts directly act on human emotions and music especially has profound influence on our inner nature, feelings and thoughts. This has been recognised at all times. Ragas, or melody moulds, are unique aesthetic entities, each with its characteristic influence and emotional effect. To subdue an angry cobra, to calm a truculent child, to quieten a troubled mind, music is an effective weapon. The vibrations set up by music do not stop with the ear; they induce vibrations in our subtle nature; the entire human nature is affected by them. This aspect has not received much attention. There are many yet unrecognised effects of music whose study will yield wonderful results; a new vista of knowledge will open out, to be put to use for the welfare of human society. The power

of music to cure diseases has been recognised in ancient times. Muhammad Hafid deals in detail with the therapeutics of music and gives hints for the use of certain musical scales for certain diseases.* A Chinese book speaks thus of good music:—"..... under the effect of music, the five social duties are without admixture, the eyes and the ears are clear, the blood and the vital spirits are balanced, habits are reformed, customs are improved, the Empire is in complete peace." Here is a fascinating line of study and research of great practical value.

6. *Pedagogy*: The teaching of music is another interesting branch of musical studies. This subject has received little attention so far. There is no point in bemoaning the passing away of the old *gurukula* system. We cannot bring it back. An intelligent system of musical instruction related to the nature of the musical art on the one hand and the psychology of the learner on the other has to be evolved. Nowadays people who study music are not all out to become professionals; many study the art in the College stage with a view to acquire the power of intelligent appreciation of the art and help its cultural growth. Hence the accent in such cases is on the cultural rather than on the performing side. So the scheme of musical studies has to be planned so as to meet the needs of the various groups of people who come to study music.

Musicology deals with all these aspects and many more.

But all this will not serve any useful purpose unless it helps the art to grow and expand into wider fields and "pastures new". The performing artist is as important for this progress as the musicologist; these two groups must co-operate and work in amity; only then the progress of

*Note:-Vide article on "Doctors now use Musical Therapy"

the art on right lines will be assured. I have often heard people belittle the value of musicology and ask, "Where does all this theory and academic study lead us to? We are concerned with the art as practised. If a person without bothering his head about all this musicology can sing well and correctly will that not do? After all the final aim is to sing or play well." Quite so. In music we have always had the *lakshya* and the *lakshana*, and it has been held that *lakshya* is the more important. But what maintains the correct standards in *lakshya* is *lakshana*. For the proper development of music *lakshya* and *lakshana* must go together. I know there are some who can sing a raga very well, without any knowledge of swara. We say, he sings from "*lakshya*". They are popular singers too. But can we call them "musicians"? Certainly not, we may call them singers. Some children learn to sing from hearing gramophone records; some of them have good voice and reproduce the record with remarkable accuracy. Can we on that account say that they know music? Something more than mere skill in singing is needed to make "music" out of "singing". And so our ancients called music a *vidya* as well as a *kala*. Fundamental principles covered by musicology find adequate and proper expression in practical music. One should help the other; to divorce one from the other is the greatest disservice one can do to the Great Muse of Art. Books on music which have come down to us from our forefathers are all books on *lakshana*, are treatises on musicology and not books of songs written in swara-tala notation. We value them because they are *lakshana-granthas*. The lack of co-operation between the musicologist and the performing musician (the professionals) which characterises the present day world of music has led to an undesirable state of affairs. In the words of Mr. K. V. Ramachandran, "Intuition is all but dead and the materials of the art are lying about us in chaotic confusion, not understood and not cared for;

and the art has stopped at the level of the professional executant, with whom the art is a means to an extra-musical end. The executant is like an actor preoccupied with the tricks of manner and inflexions of voice, more than the message of music. Without wishing to decry the human media through which the art has to propagate itself, one may distinguish between the art and its handmaid, between music and the musician who interprets it The professional musician is too much in the picture and he has revealed an amazing capacity to throw music itself into the background. We do not engage an actor to expound the drama or literature, but for expound and interpreting music we invariably choose a singer or player, forgetting that there are vast domains of knowledge beyond his ken, with which he is not only not familiar, but which he has never cared to equip himself with. It is just here that the musicologist of the *right kind* could render valuable services." He goes on to say, "One need not be surprised that under the present day conditions our music which was once a hyper-aesthetic poetry, has turned prosy and bids fair to end itself as a debased and impoverished jargon; and all theoretical disagreements of the present just relate to the tweedledum and tweedledee of that jargon." When we think of the dramatic art we think of Kalidasa, Bhavabhuti, Shakespeare, Goethe and so on and not of particular actors who acted the drama and rendered the characters. But in the music of the present day undue accent is laid on the "performing" to the neglect of the inspired art of which the performer is, (in most cases, an inadequate) exponent. Inspired makers and codifiers of music will remain for ever as great figures ~~in the pages~~ of history while popular singers may be forgotten. Music because its appeal is primarily to human emotions, cannot cut itself away from intellect. It is in the synthesis of Intellect

and Emotion that Intuition, which is above both but includes both, is born.

It is a mistake to think that musicology has nothing to do with practical music. It is just the other way about. It has a direct bearing and exerts a wholesome influence on the practice of music. A performing musicologist will be a great asset. Many of the pitfalls into which the ordinary professional sometimes falls would be easily avoided. Several deficiencies which we note in the concerts of the present day would not be there if the singer were a musicologist also. I do not propose to detail all these deficiencies. Let me however just refer to a few noticeable flaws. The primary function of Art is to produce maximum effect with minimum effort. The whole concert will have to be well thought out and planned to serve this end. Frequently we find things happening the other way; with tremendous effort the musician produces poor effect. He must study himself, take note of his limitations and strong points and so blend them as to produce an aesthetic effect. If there is a handicap of the voice he has to use his knowledge of acoustics to produce the right kind of voice (of course, subject to inborn limitations). Each one has some special best; he has to explore and find that line and concentrate upon it and make his special contribution. Improvisation and originality (*Kalpana*, *Manodharma*) are the very life of our music. A musician should always be on the look-out for discovering some new rendering, some new way of presentation, some new phrasings revealing some hidden beauties in the raga and so on. Even in arranging the programme of a concert the various items have to be chosen with a view to aesthetic effect. I have seen several concerts being flat solely on account of a badly arranged programme. It is not my idea here to give any suggestions on programme-making. Fore-thought is necessary and also some knowledge of human psychology. The performer should feel

en rapport with the audience, sense their reaction and use his art to pull them along with him. Of course all this requires a certain degree of culture and musicology just supplies that useful and indispensable element.