

# IDENTIFYING DISINTEGRATIVE NARRATIVES AGAINST CULTURAL UNITY & CONTINUITY OF VEDIC SAMA GANA & MODERN DAY DHRUPAD VOCAL MUSIC

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## ABSTRACT

*Present is a survey of literature that throws light on narratives that counter the continuity and unity of our art music. It goes a little beyond being merely this. It looks at possible refutations to these narratives. It does not remain a matter of music, but gains civilisational significance because when we contextualise Védic music the milieu cannot be eschewed. As such we see here that disintegrative narratives are deliberately or unwittingly offered increasing the plausibility of allegations of factual inaccuracies in these narratives. More is the comprehension of an issue from multiple disciplinary views, better is the chance of a clearer picture emerging, if not the truth itself. Here, I have given literary evidences of disintegrative elements in the often referred narratives insinuating no continuity of Indian art music from Védic times to modern Dhrupad. This will subsequently show a direction in which future arguments can be built against such narratives. The project stems from my personal familiarity with both forms of artistic communication.*

## Introduction

Véda is like the moon; surprising the beholder by perennially re-appearing! Véda pulsates with unfathomable musical momentum. No disruption or change could fully dislodge or deeply modify its rich, highly complex, and codified manifestations, including its most

valuable attendant, nay, essence, music. Yet, theories with disintegrative potentials abound, which I identify and show are superficial.

Notably, Onkāra is Udgītha in Sāma Vēda which Āchārya Upaniṣad considers pivotal, notwithstanding that G. U. Thite; (Personal Consultations, 2009) terms Upaniṣada-s as 'useless'. Selina Thielmann's (1995) view separating Carnatic and Hindustāni is also illustrative:

*"The comparison of musical forms represents...most problematic areas... Samgitaratnakara...as evidence ...show similarities...only at the surface; ...differences...cannot be easily ignored."*

This adds fuel to the Ārya-n - 'Dravidi-an' division narrative which I expose. These musics are rooted in Védic singing and concept. Mere musicological analyses are superficial.

This is about music of Sāma Vēda and its derivative viz., Dhruvad. Brihaspati (1976) will be rather instructive in this story. Mukherjī's (1929) reference to esoteric view of Pranava in Nāḍabindu Upaniṣad is illustrative of coherence of Indian music (See Plate I):

So, 'Om' is at once an unchangeable high-context core cultural symbol, concept, and essence of Sāma Gāna and Dhruvad. It has interesting implications in grammar, semantics, semeiotics, and transcendence among other areas.

In the context of Sāma Vēda, Roy (2018) gives the following triunities:

- svāra, mūdrā, and tattva,
- stōbha, dēvatā, and Sām, and
- in terms of three Vēda-s.

Āchārya's (1985) inclusion of present day Afghānistān in the Védic discourse is unifying, but imprisoned by the Ārya-n myth. Analyses of specific models, viz. Sāma Gāna and Dhruvad Gāna will in future help expose unmistakable links of Vēda with Indian thoughts and practices in general. Contested cultural communication of Sāma Gāna the Sūḍprabandha or Sālag Prabandha (Mukund, 1978 & Prem Latā Śarma, 1978) to today's Dhruvad warrant intellectual attention.

### **Literature**

Lath's (ibid) views are confusing. He highlights a disconnect between Sāma Gāna and Prabandha, but adds that the material of Gāndharva is that *pada* which gives the experience of svāra and tāla which Abhinavagupta describes as 'sāmyamātrāphalan-naśakyamvaktum'; 'the association of tāl and svāra in gāndharva, was beyond description'. Again, he opines that words are unnecessary in music, potentiating a dichotomy between music and

literature. He agrees that Sāma Gāna, Gītikā-s, and Jāti-s are relatives, yet in his interpretation of Dattilam, Rāga-s have lesser moksha-potential than that of jāti-s. He (1987) says there is no literary description of 'gamaka' in Prabandha. And since Prabandha was in practice in Śārangdev's time (13th C), does Lath create room for the theory of import of gamaka in Dhrupad from non-Sanskrit sources? His discussion about Dhrupad and Khayāl, hint at the superiority of the latter over the former. He applies self-imposed values of 'form' and 'style' to show that Dhrupad as a 'closed form' and it did not have 'style' prior to Khayāl. Lath concludes that the genesis of Dhrupad needs to be revised.

However, Ritwik Sānyāl (1995) declares that ālāp is the inseparable sthāyi bhāva of *pada*. Ćoudhari (1978) also treats them as integral. She (1986) quotes a 'Maharshi' as declaring 'yasyādakśarsambaddhantatsarvampadasangyitam'; whatever is related to 'akśara' is *pada* and quotes Bharata as declaring:

'gāndharva Myanmayā prokatansvaratālapadātmakam  
padantasya bhaved vastu svaratālānubhāvakam'

Francoise Delvouye (1987), denies mention or definition of Dhrupad in Sanskrit Texts before the 'end of 17th century' in Bhāvabhatta's Anup Sangīt Ratnakar. She refers to Śahab Śarmadī's Persian interpretations and translations of Rāja Mānsingh Tomar's (1486-1516) Mān Kutuhala. Śarmadī writes 'ever since Dhrupad came to be recognised, Marag (Mārgi sangeet as opposed to Deshi; Mātanga Muni's Brihaddeshi 8th Century) lost its foothold. This is a belief in disruptive change rather than change with continuity.

But Prem Latā Śarmā (1992) for the first time makes explicit the difference between Jāti, Mūrānā, and Rāga as given by Mātanga Muni. Interestingly, she draws from Brihadārnyakaopaniṣada, Gobhila (Sāma Védic Rishi ) Smṛiti, Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna, Mahābhārata, Pāṇini's and Nārada's Śikṣhā-s, and Bharatīhari's Vākyapadīya, Nāṭyashāstra and Dattilam. This indicates an integrated approach and continuity despite change which Lath also agrees to. Sudhākar Mālaviya (1997) in his explanations of the Gōbhīla Grīhya Sūtra presents the Janyā-named 'Dhruva' which takes back the term to great antiquity and will be traced.

In modern times, Dhrupad comprehends singing in the various idioms in which the *pada* can be prosodic or prosaic, but meaningful (Subhadra Ćoudhari, 1986). She reminds us Prem Lata Śarma's surmise that since vāggeyakār (extempore composer-singer) Nāyak Bakhsū's *pada*-s use the terms 'grām-mūrānā' profusely, and must Śārangdev's contemporary.

The *pada* aspect has been examined by various authors like Sunitikumar Āatterji (1967) based on Tānsen's own *pada*-s concluding that he was a devout Brāhmaṇa, which naturally questions the Islamic influence theory on Rāga music. In fact, it is history that my Dhrupad master's father Ustād Husseinnuddin Dāgar had returned to his original faith and renamed himself as Tānsen Pande which is the original name of Tānsen.

On the flip side, G. U. Thitte; (Personal Consultations, 2009) fully rejects the Sāma Védic connection of today's art music saying that the intonations of Sāma Gāna were not musical at all (personal discussions), despite the fact that Nāradiya Śikṣā clearly states that the Śruti (or key note) of Sama is 'venormadhyama'— the fourth note of the flute.

The Sāma Gāna of Kauthuma recension of Kāshi , as it is sung today (e.g. Bhāskarnāth Bhattācārya, MSRVVP Ujjain), does not sound like the sophisticated rāga in Dhrupad although he (personal interview, 2013) strongly claims otherwise. But recordings of say, Dravid Śāstri of Rānāyaniya recension (Deccan College, Pune) with tānpura, sound like Rāga.

Rāmamūrthy Śroutigal of Śārada Muth, Śringeri (Personal Consultation: 2013) says that the South Indian Kauthuma śākhā renditions were painstakingly revived by Satyavrata Sāmaśrami of Bengal. Kumbakonam pundits used the harmonium to establish the *svara*-s and remove errors. This poses to be a challenge. Roy (in press) points out specific issues that have crept in due to the printed version of Sāman songs, but not due to a fault in the tradition and stresses the strengths of the oral tradition. He also observes different singing of the Sāman-s by people of the same Śākhā (recension) of different geographies and are justified as *desh-bheda*. Note that Rāga-s also have place names.

Vināyaka Rāmaćandra Ratāte (1991) while tracing the seeds of Dhrupad in Sāma Vēda places the Mārgi sangeet in the stotra, stoma, and srauta categories. He terms Dēśi as Praghāta which comprise the Uttarārćika, Pūrvārćika, and rik-s. I have technical reservations regarding this categorization to delineate.

Stōbha-s in Sāma Vēda are very special, but have been ridiculed calling it Da-Da by some (Suryakāntā, 1970).

### **Disintegrative Narrative**

The seeds of disintegration can be diagnosed in discourses on Indian music and its historicity. E.g. Regarding the Védic chronology, Rg Vēda Sanhitā mentions Sāmgāna (2.12.16-17; 2.43.1-2; 2.5.3; etc) and Gritsamad and other Rishi-s are considered extremely ancient Rg Vedins who knew Sāma mantra-s like the 'Prajāpatayehārdayam'

a category known as Ānagāna (in Omprakāsh Pāndeya, 2005). Védic chronology is itself disintegrative with deep consequences not only on music (E.g in Lewis Rowell, 1992) but also on the Védic community.

The misunderstood 'Apaurusheya' of Vēda finds a parallel with 'upaja' of Dhrupad in my proposed work as another cornerstone. In this context, Marc Whitman (n.d) of the Institute for Frontier Areas of Psychology and Mental Health, Freiburg, Germany writes that modification of 'self and time, can be induced in meditation, through sensory deprivation, in rhythm-induced trance (Block, 1979; Vaitl et al., 2005) and musical experience (Schäfer, Fachner, & Smukalla, 2013)'. Further, an interesting sociolinguistics revelation is proposed on Jāti and Vēda taking a cue from (*Taittirya Brāhmaṇa*, 3.12.9 in *Usha Bhise*, 1986).

Ratāte's premises will be examined deeply to verify my reservations regarding his mārgi-deshi categories. I practically unearth the real mūrchanā-s (not in practice) that led to Rāga, and locate them in Sāma Gāna. Lath's form' and 'style' arguments will be refuted in the light of deeper Védic values such as śhanda, prabandha, stōbha, vikriti, pada, mantra, mātṛā, gamaka, and the corpus of Indian theories of meaning-making and their derivative Western ideas of Semeiotics.

Āturvedi (2005) shows cultural integration of Nāṭyaśāstra and Vēda-s. To Brihaspati's work I add dimensions of practical Sāma Gāna, Stōbha analysis, Śikhsā, Shabdarava, and Tantra. M Phātak (1972), a Sanskritist and classical musician instructs me from his comparative study of the places of the vocal apparatus used in pronunciation of various varna-s in Pāninīya Śikshā and other phonetic works. This will help drawing phonetic and phonological parallels with Dhrupad alāp syllables. It is in this complexity that the present research finds its underpinnings. The present interdisciplinary Sāma-Dhrupad analysis will serve to decode and re-codify its constituents based on literary evidence and personal insights to expose deep qualitative linkages between music and other disciplines, often set apart by strict disciplinarians. At issue is the story of in-coherence due to an exclusive applicability of vāda-s like varnavāda, padavāda, vākyavāda, and mantravāda to Sanskrit grammar and not to music.

Bharatrihari's sphōta is compared with stōbha and rāga on the basis of his law that sphōta is unchangeable despite 'vrittibhēda'. If rāga is fully embodied it does not change in various tempi. Also, Jōśi (2007) asserts that Bharatrihari never says sphota is over and above dhvani. This takes sphota closer to Vēda. He adds that later grammarians

changed the meaning of sphota as a single sentence unit. Anyway, I posit that Dhrupada validates the truth of various vāda-s of grammar, and gives us more via a different meaning-making philosophy.

G H Tārlekar (1979) integrates music, Tantra, and Nāth traditions in Bharatrihari, Abhinava, Śāṅgdev ('Karna-nāth'), and Nandikeshwar. I contest many potentially disintegrative observations of Thitte, Lath, Delvouye, Widess, Suryakānta (1970). The Kalātattvakosh (Baumer, B., Āttopādhyāya, S., Pāṇḍa, N.C., Ghoshāl, P., Tripāthy, K. *Eds.*, et.al.1996 onwards) helps immensely in this. The research is also instructed by works on Sāma Vēda by G H Tarlekar (1995), and his translation of Sangīt Ratnākara (1989).

Lath's (1978) comparison on the basis of mōksha-potential of Mārgi and Rāga musics of Dattilam is an unnecessary dichotomy because Indian practices cannot be divorced from dharma, artha, kāma, & mōksha (Śāṅgdev in Dīkshitār 1984, Kapūr, 2019, Study Week, IAS Śīmlā). My conjecture is that the 'Dhrupad' of Mānakutuhala became an umbrella term for several types of Mārgi & Deshi sangīt which permeate Prabandha.

This thought stems from the fact that Bhāvabhatta (17th C) has connected Dhrupad to Prabandha. Sangītratnākara states just the same as given below (in M. R. Dīkshitār, 1984) (See Plate II).

This integrative quality is due not to an artificial 'Āryan' or 'Brāhminical' integrative effort with the Dravid, as Suniti Kumār Ātterjē (1967) likes to believe, but coherence of the entire Hindu culture in Vēda. At issue is Bhise's (1986) search of Sāman svara-s in Rēcā-s since udātta, anudātta, and svarita are accentuations and not musical. She seems to confuse between svara-s mentioned by Pātanjali in his Mahābhāshya (1.2.33) and those in the Taittirya Prātiśākhya (23.14). Yet, I see coherence.

Stobha-s '...are supposed to be of great sacral significance' according to Tarlekar (2001). I conjecture that the letters used in ālāpa of Dhrupad are also akin to stōbha-s (unprecedented approach) with reference to Mātanga Muni's Brihaddeshi (8th C) and the hoary Pushpa/Phulla Sutra. Richard Widess (1992) also talks of non-semantic words used in Āryā music of Nepāl. But he places it in Vajrayāna Buddhism and calls it Āryā Dhrupad. He also tries to separate the so-called Talvāṇḍi 'gharānā' Dhrupad extant in Pākistān from Indian Dhrupad on the basis of varna-s used by them. I refute Widess premised on Yāskka and Unādi.

Although Śāṅgdev in his Sangīt Ratnākara [5th section 231 to 236], differentiates between Sāma and Vēdic Sāma, but says that

the Stobhākshara-s used in Sāma should be the same as the Védic ones. Stōbha-s which set the pace of the Sāman-s (Āndogya Upanishad), will be studied in-depth.

I posit that stōbha-s in Sāma Gāna represent Śabda-Brahma (Which Muni Mātanga also explains) are akin to ālāp in Dhrupad as also mentioned by Prem Latā Śarmā (1992) in the context of śhanda in Prabandha forms as the superset of Dhrupad. Also, stōbha should be included in discussions on Sikshā and Vyākaraṇa as per evidence (in M. R. Dīkshītār, 1984) (see plate III):

Presented is the idea of Śabda-Rava (Vāsudēv Śāstri Parāñjapē, Personal Consultations). The idea of Śabda in the contexts of Saṅskṛit Vyākaraṇa, Mimāṃsā, Niruktam, and Nyāya completes the story.

Despite the apparent incoherences, I present evidence from Indian organology (as in Nāṭya Śāstra, Nāradya Śikshā, & Gobhīla Grīhya Sūtra) and (Mālavīya, 1996 & Müller, 1989) that Sām Gāna is indeed a musical activity intertwined with the 16 saṅskāra-s of Védic/Hindu lives over and above the Yajna-s and is the porto-precursor of Dhrupad which the late Aminuddin Dāgar (DD interview) had declared as 'folk' music.

Bharata (much before Islām/Mughal/British reached India) writes about Dhruvaka and Dattila talks of Dhrupad. Delvuoye's contradicts herself (1986) in her bibliography (including Persian Sources) of Dhrupad and mentions Mādhava's (who died around 1554-1556) work Vīrbhānuday Kāvyaṃ in Sanskrit which mentions Dhrupad which points at an established older term and tradition of Dhrupad which Śarmā (fully) and Widess (partially) agree. The research will show that Talwāṇḍi/Khandar/Kandahār/Gandhār vāṇi is of Védic origins.

Present are strong evidences links of Sāma Gāna, Prabandha, and 'bandish'. Howard (1986) exposes that mnemonic devices in Sāma Gāna show Védic antiquity and continuity found even in Western classical music. The long Sanskrit tradition expressed in Nāṭya Śāstra, Dattilam, Brihaddeshī which continues through the 11th, 12th, up to 17th featuring Śāṅgdeva's Ratnākara (1175–1247), Abhinavagupta's Abhinava Bhārati (975 - 1025), Kallinātha's Kalānidhi (1430), Sinhabhopāla's Saṅgīta Sudhākara (1330), Swāmi Rāmdās (1608 -1681), Ahobala's Saṅgīt Pārijāta (1665), Bhāvabhata's Anūpa Saṅgīta Ratnākara and many others (1674-1709 and later) are instructive.

The possible reasons for diminishing use of Prabandha concepts, yet common in khayāl considered later than Dhrupad, need to be investigated.

## Conclusions

Fallibility of arguments that weaken the inherent unity of Indian *milieu* from pre-historic to the historic periods are diagnosed through extant Védic practices. Interdisciplinary models viz, Sāma Gāna and Dhrupad individually and collectively help to diagnose such fallibilities and go a long way in facilitating an integral approach at mending bridges that are casualties of discourses embedded with weakening potentialities as Trojan Horses.

### Part-I

अ अग्नि   घोषिणी चिन्माली पतंगी	उ वायु   वायुघेगिनी नामधेया पेन्द्रो	म सुय   वैष्णवी शांकरी महती	* वरुण   ध्रुवा मौनी ब्राह्मी
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### Part-II

सामवेदादिदं गीतं संजग्राह पितामहः । सं-र. १-१-२५  
श्रुतिभ्यस्तु स्वाराः षड्जर्षभगान्धारमध्यमाः । सं-र. ३-१-२३  
तस्यगीतस्यमाहात्म्यं के प्रशंसितुमीशते ।  
धर्मार्थकाममोक्षाणां इदमेवैकसाधनम् ॥ सं-र. १-१-३०

### Part-III

यथाविधानेन पठन् सामगेयमविच्युतम् ।  
सावधानस्तदभ्यासात् परं ब्रह्माधिगच्छति ॥  
इति याज्ञवल्क्य. स्मृति प्राय-११२

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