MUSIC

Our music which has a very long tradition and is based on a sound and elaborate system, is still considered in the West as some what strange music. Few actually claim to understand it: the number of those who appreciate it is certainly very small.

When we listen to music to which we are not accustomed we often forget one thing: that foreign music of a developed kind which does not depend upon simple melodies and simple human emotional expressions, like folk music, is purely a matter of convention. For instance, you so naturally like Beethoven when you think that it is possible for every one all over the world to appreciate him. Yet if you spring upon and uninitiated Pakistani villager a piece from Beethoven you will find that he not only does not appreciate it but also considers it very strange. Perhaps if we remember the simple fact, it becomes easier to be a little more sympathetic towards music which is not your own.

The history of our music is very ancient. It s origin, like the origin of anything that has roots in the distant past is lost in myths and legends. In the same breath ancient music scientists and historians have analysed and evolved complicated musical theory on a scientific basis and have narrated fantastic tales mixing

musical
divinity with simple facts. One of the earliest books on music
is Rikpratisakhya which was supposed to have been written around
400 B.C. It is interesting to note that a little before that
period Pythegorous had evolved an elaborate musical theory
for the Greeks.

Here we come upon a very interesting fact. Although
we do not know who influenced whom, there is a great deal of
similarity between the musical theories evolved in our country
and in Greece. First of all, the legend and history
of both musical systems have same Second, both had
developed a scale which had more or less the same number of
intervals. In Greece the octave was divided into twentyfour
small units. In our musical scale, it was divided into twentytwo
units. Some believe that at one point of history, ours was
also divided into twentyfour units. Besides, two earliest
Greek scales Dorie and Myxolydic, have close affinity with
two of our early scales. Then both had laid greated emphasis
on rythm and time-measure. All this shows that there must
have been a considerable exchange of ideas between the two
peoples. It may be quite possible that our early musical
theory was directly influenced by the Greeks. We have at least
historical proofs of Greek influence on the sculpture of our
country through Gandhara, the district of Kandhar which
was once a great centre of Indo-Greek culture. ~~But the Greek~~

One of the scales which had great resembles with the Greek scale was known as Gandhara scale. But the Greek music itself was considerably influenced by ancient Persia and Asia Minor, as would the scales named after ~~KKYXX~~ Lydia would show. However, for the present time we may perhaps solve the problem by saying that both the musical systems came from common Aryan stock.

Talking of dividing the Octave into smaller units, it is rather surprising the way the music scientists in our country and Greece knew the numbers of the vibration of each note. They had no scientific device as we have today to count accurately these vibration numbers. However, their calculation was not absolutely correct.

Like the Western scale of today we have a set scale. However, the early development of our scale is clearly known to us. All that we know that it was based on tetrachord which was the scale of the Aryans. However, like the early Greek scale which was also based on tetrachord, our ancient scale did not climb but extended downward. In course of time, a fifth note was established and thus the scale became pentatonic. We still find pentatonic scale in many parts of the world. After this obviously with increased use of instruments, two more notes came to be accepted and the scale became heptatonic: ~~a scale on which every new the~~ and then octave.

~~Western music is based~~. But for a long time two different scales - one downward meant for the human voice and the other upward meant for instruments-existed side by side.

I have already said that the Greek scale and our scale were divided into many microtonal intervals. Microtonal interval is a division of the semitone. However, the idea of microtone often creates a confusion as our scale is still supposed to be divided into twentytwo units. Western listeners generally believe that they are unable to appreciate our music because of the use of microtone. Actually, the division of the semitone into microtones is more a product of the mathematicians rather than the musicians. If we accept the feasibility and aesthetic usefulness of these microtones, we might divide the ~~xxxxxxx~~ present Western octave into at least twentytwo microtones and it would not make any difference to the Western music. Actually before Saint Gregory the ~~xx~~ Western scale which was at that time based on the Greek scale was divided into twenty-four units.

The basis of the melody in our music is called rag. It is actually a substitute for Western scale. Rags are merely a different series of notes within the octave. One rag is differentiated by ~~different~~ from another ~~by the number of~~ the prominence given to certain fixed notes and the sequence of particular notes. Rag is nothing but melody types. But since our music is

essentially melodic and since it has a very long history, the history of the development of raag is quite complicated. A great deal of importance is naturally given to the raags which at one time were supposed to number over 3,000. However, what is accepted today is a series of six primary raags and some secondary raags. Although some would claim that these raags are rigid and do not change, actually over the centuries these raags have been constantly changing, borrowing new melodies, marrying old ones to create a new raag. Today very little importance is given to stories attached to the raags such as the cosmic power for these raags. At one time it was believed that raags can influence human beings and nature as stars and planets were once supposed to do so. At that time it was also firmly believed that each raag must be sung at a certain prescribed time of day and that each raag is connected with some human mood or passion. The twentyfour hours were divided into eight periods and there was a raag for each of these periods. There were also different raags for different seasons.

If we divide the raags into sad and merry, we find that the sad raags have an average of three flats and the merry raags an average of two flats. If we divide the raags into the morning raag and the evening raag, we find that the morning raag has its predominent notes about G and the evening raag about E

Some of the raags are certainly difficult to sing as they involve clean three octaves.

GAMAK

Another important feature of our music is its grace or as we call it Gamak. Our music is essentially ornamental. Every possible device is ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ utilised in order to bring ~~xxxxxx~~ out the inherent ~~xxxx~~ beauty of the particular melody sung or played. And grace can also be used almost without limit as our music is non-harmonic.

Unfortunately there is no exact equivalent of grace in Western music whether vocal or instrumental. In a remote way grace can ~~be~~ possibly be compared with trills of the Western music but the objective of the two ~~xxx~~ is certainly not the same. ~~Grace is an essential part of our music.~~ In Western music the passage from one note to another does not allow many variations. ~~xxx~~ Western instruments have comparatively thick strings placed at a high tension and each note produces one single full-bodied tune. In our instruments the tension is low and each note is capable of producing varied musical nuances. In other words, strings of our instruments can be deflected considerably. The main object of the grace is to bring out the full meaning of each note by the use of light and shade.

DRONE

All of our music is played and sung to a drone. This perhaps takes the place of Western harmony and provides a charming background for the melody. Without this our singers and musicians would feel quite lost.

The drone is generally produced by an instrument called Tambura, Although some instruments may have their own drone instruments.

Then again an additional drone is provided by sympathetic strings numbering sometimes twentytwo which are placed directly under the main strings. These sympathetic strings are never played but when the main strings above them are played, they produce a charming background: a cluster of minute sounds that create a gorgeous humming sound.

One of the most developed sides of our music is certainly time measure which we call 'tal'. It is indeed a very important aspect of our music and many Western students of our music consider tem-measure far more developed than the Western music. Musical time in our country originated mainly from prosody and meters of poetry. In ancient times great emphasis was laid on the exact value of syllable in verse. The time length was all important and there was no accent whatever. Until the previous century there was hardly any prose in the country. All this has helped in the extraordinary development of time measure in our music. There are infinite variations in the rythm and the rythm groups are not only mathematically accurate but also easthetically pleasing.

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Difference between Western and our music.

Some misunderstanding is still exist in the west about our music. It is popularly believed that the Western ears cannot appreciate our music because of microtones used by it. This notion is absolutely wrong. Actually Grace is confused with microtones.

There is another wrong notion that we have a scale which is different from that of the West. This is also wrong. Our scale and the scale of the West are both based on octave.

Now the differences between the two musical systems:

1. Our music is purely melodic and the Western music is harmonic. In other words, Our music has developed purely on melodic lines: the Western music, with the discovery of counterpoint polyphony and harmony, has developed in the region of harmony. Until this change in the Western music, the two system were more or less the same.

2. The melody of our music is cast in one definite mood and no variations are allowed to change that mood. On the other hand, every music device is brought into play to fully express that mood. The Western music is not cast in one mood only. That is why, to an uninitiated Pakistani who is accustomed to look for one definite goal in each melody, is baffled by what he may consider the multiplicity of sounds in the Western music

3. The next big difference comes from the use of grace in our music.

4. Another reason for the difference in our music is the absence of the tempered scales in our music. The Western ears are used to certain fixed intervals of the tempered scale and it is difficult for them to appreciate music using different intervals.

5. There is the difference of time measure.