

VOCAL MUSIC DEPARTMENT

COURSE - M.A. (Compulsory Course) (CBCS) 2020

Semester - 4.1; Group - A.

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Indian Musical Instruments

1. Rudra veena

Rudra veena is a large plucked string instrument, used in Hindusthani Classical Music. In North India ,it is often called 'Veen'.

According to the Indian Mythology, it is created by lord Shiva, while he is contemplating on the beauty of his wife Parvati. In ancient India, there was a special type of veena, called 'Roudri Veena'. Rudra Veena is an independent solo instrument. But it may also be used as an accompanying instrument. In the medieval India, Rudra Veena used to accompany the Prabandha Sangeet and later to Classical Dhrupad. Raja Sourindramohan Tagore opined that Rudra-veena is a developed figure of Rabab; but there are some differences between Rabab and Rudra-veena. Perhaps, Rudra-veena is a developed

from of ancient Roudri Veena, although, there are some differences between Roudri Veena and Rudra veen. Actually, the form and figure of Rudra veena, which is found at present, is totally a modified form and this modification has been done by Zia- Mohiuddin Dagar of Dagar gharana in the 20th century.

Rudra-veena has a long tubular body made of Teak-wood, which gives a longer life and better tone to the veena. The length of this tubular body is 54 to 62 inches. Two large, round-shape dried and hollowed gourds are attached under the tubular body. Gourds are of about 14 inches is diameter. The Veena consists of a finger-board, the length of which is about 3^{1/2} feet.

Twenty four wooden frets are fixed on the finger-board and are made immovable with the help of a special wax-like liquid and thin sharp-edged plates are fixed on the top of these frets. However, the number of frets are not fixed and tend to vary according to the artist's opinion.

The veena has seven strings, of which, 4 are main playing strings and 3 are chikari strings, two on the right side and one on the left of the tubular body. All of these

strings are tied with 3 nails on one corner of the body. 4 of the main playing strings pass through the main bridge and before being finally tied up in to the respective pegs, they pass through on upper bridge, called *uttar-meru*, the main bridge is called *purva-meru*. The three *chikari*-strings are mounted upon two side-bridges, one at either side and meet their respective pegs.

Rudra-veena is played with two plectrums worn in the index and middle fingers of the right hand. While the *chikari*-strings are flicked with the help of the small finger's nail. The *chikari*- strings of the left side is flicked with left hand left finger's nail. The traditional sitting posture of veena-playing is called *Vajrasan* and it is quite difficult. Some of the players used to sit in *Sukhaasan*. Traditionally , while playing, Rudra-veena is placed diagonally and the upper-gourd rests upon the left-shoulder while the lower-gourd rests upon the right-thigh of the player. The finger-board is held closed to the chest.

Well-known Rudra-veena players are Bnade Ali Khan(Indore), Abid Hussain Khan(Lucknow), Rajab Ali Khan(seni), Krishna rao Kollapure(Gwalior),

Asad Ali Khan (Gwalior), Wazir Khan(Rampur), Zia Mohiuddin Dagar (Dagar), Bahauddin Dagar(Dagar) etc.

Some prominent gharanas of Rudra veena are – Seni, Jaipur, Indore, Kolkata, Dagar etc. Seni veen gharana had been established by Zafar Khan and had been extended by the disciples of Nisar Ali Khan and Sadique Ali Khan. They were the sons of Zafar Ali Khan. Jaipur veen Gharana had been established by Rajab Ali Khan. He received his veen training from Bande Ali Khan of Indore. Indore Veen Gharana had been established by Bande Ali Khan and was popularised by his disciples. Kolkata veen Gharana had been established by Promothonath Banerjee. He was the disciple of Wazir Khan of Rampur and Murad Ali Khan of Indore. Disciples of Promothonath popularised this gharana. Dagar Veen Gharana had been established by Beheram Khan who was an expert of dhrupad, kheyal and veen playing. All the descendants and disciples of Dagar gharana were expert veen players.

2) Saraswati Veena

This veena is named after the Hindu Goddess ‘Devi Saraswati’, who is usually depicted holding or playing the

instrument. It is mostly used in carnatic music , either in traditional music or in contemporary music; but mostly in carnatic classical music. The present form of the veena with 24-fixed frets evolved in Tanjavur, Tamil nadu during the reign of Raja Raghunatha Nayak. For this reason, this veena is also called Raghunatha veena or Tanjore Veena.

Saraswati Veena was developed from Kinnori veena; made in several regions in South India. Specially, Tanjavur provides most sophisticated tone. The purest natural sound is extracted by plucking with natural fingernails, on a rosewood construction.

The Veena is about 4 feet in length. It's design consists of a large resonator (kudam), carved and hallowed out of a log, usually of jackfruit-wood; a tapering hallow-neck tube (Dandi), usually of rosewood , tapped with 24 brass or bell-metal frets set in scalloped black-wax on wooden-tracks and a tuning box, cluminating in a downward curved and on ornamental dragon's head(yali).

If the veena is built from a single piece of wood, it is called Ekantha Veena. A small table-tike

wooden-bridge(Kudurai), about $2 \times 2^{1/2} \times 2$ inches – is tapped by a convex brass-plate glued in place with resin. Two sets of plastic or horn are on the top-board (palakai) of the resonator. At the open-end (PurveMeru), a respectively small spherical wooden structure is fixed under the Dandi, to balance the beauty and to help the players at veena-playing , while the Veena is placed parallel to the lap of the player. Sometimes a small-gourd is also used instead of wooden-structure.

4 main playing- strings, stretched from fine tuning connectors, attached to the end of the resonator, across the bridge and above the fret-board to 4 large-headed pegs in the tuning-box. 3 chikary-strings cross a curving side-bridge, leaning against the main-bridge and stretch on the player's side of the neck to 3pegs, matching those of the main-playing-strings. All seven strings are of steel, with the lower strings either solid thick.

The Veena is played by sitting cross-legged with the instrument, held tilted slightly away from the player. The open-end (upper part) with its spherical structure rests on the players left thigh, the left arm

passing beneath the neck with the hand curving up and around so that the fingers rest upon the frets. The palm of the right hand rests on the edge of the top-plank so that the fingers can pluck the strings. The chikari strings are played with the little finger. The large resonator of the Veena is placed on the floor, beyond the right thigh.

Saraswati Veena is an independent solo instrument. But it may also be used as an accompanying instrument. In South India, Sraswati Veena used to be accompanied to various types of Sabha-sangeet as well as Kalpana-sangeet also viz, Padam, Kritanam, Alapanam etc.

Well known veena players of carnatic Music are Veena Dhanammal, Jayanti Kumaresh, Punya Srinivas, Rajesh Vaidya, E. Gayalri etc.

3) Sarod

Sarod, is a stringed musical instrument of Hindustani Music tradition of Northern India. The Sarod is an adaptation of the Afghan Rabab, which arrived in India during the 16th century. It is true that most of the holders of Sarod are musical descendants of Afghan Rabab players, who mastered the instrument and it's playing

techniques. These Afghans are originally horse-traders and soldiers in the Mughal cavalry and they were amateur musicians. They played the Afghan 'Rabab' and after coming to India, some of them settled on Rewa, some in Shahjhanpur and some in Bulandsahar. They were music-lover and they learnt the music of that time, from Vilas Khan, the most prominent son of Tansen.

There are three main branches of sarod-playing in India and they are Gwalior gharana, Locknow gharana and Shahjhanpur gharna. Gwalior gharana had been established by Ghulam Ali Khan Bangash. This gharana is running through his descendants- Nanhe Khan (son), Hafiz Ali Khan(grandson), Amjad Ali Khan (great grandson) etc. Locknow gharana had been established by Niyamatullah Khan. This gharana is running through his descendants and disiples i.e, Qaramatullah Khan(son), Kaukabh Khan(son), Shakhawat Hossen Khan(grandson), Shyam Ganguly(Disciple of Qaramatullah Khan) etc. Shahjhanpur gharana had been established by Inayat Hossen Khan and this gharana is running through his descendents Shafayet Hossen Khan(son), Shakhawat Hossen Khan(grandson), Fida Hossen Khan(nephew) etc. Besides

these, there is another sarod-branch and that is Allauddin Khan- sarod-gharana. This gharana is running through the descendants and disciples- Ali Akbar Khan(son), Annapurna Devi(daughter), Jatindranath Bhattacharjee(disciple), Ashis Khan and Dhyanesh Khan(both are grandsons), Timirbaran Bhattacharjee (disciple) etc.

It is Niyamatulla Khan, who changed the Rabab into sarod around 1820, and in the twentieth century sarod was re-improved significantly by Allauddin Khan of Rampur gharana. Sarod is a fretless instrument to produce the note-continuity, that is called 'meend', which is very important in Indian Music.

The conventional sarod is of 17 to 25 – stringed instrument; 4 to 5 main strings, 3 to 4 chikari strings and 12 to 13 tarafdar strings. Sarod is made of teak wood , a soundboard made of goat-skin, stretched across the face of the resonator. The finger-board is made of either steel or nickel-plated cast steel. Normally, there are 6 pegs for main-strings, 2 rounded pegs for chikari-strings and 11 to 15 pegs for tarafdar-strings. Some of the sarod-players have added a sound-resonator at the open-end.

Allauddin Khan of Rampur had also designed sarod. His sarod was larger and longer than the conventional instrument and the instrument had 25 strings in all. These include 4 main-strings, 4 jod-strings, 2 chikari-strings and 15 tarafdar-strings and the instruments produced a large range of 3 octaves. Sarod strings are generally made of steel; strings are plucked with a plectrum, made of polished coconut shell, horn, cowbone etc.

Sarod is played by sitting cross-legged with the instrument, held slightly tilted away from the player. The open end(upper-part) with its small spherical structure rests on the player's left thigh, the left arm passing beneath the neck with the hand curving up and around so that the fingers rest upon the fingerboard. The palm of the right-hand rests on the edge of the top-plank so that the fingers can pluck the strings. The large resonator of the sarod is placed on the right- thigh.

Sarod is an independent solo instrument. But it may also be used as an accompanying instrument. Sarod used to be generally accompanied to various type of

aristocratic-songs, light-songs etc. Viz, Ghazals, any types of raga-based songs etc.

Well known sarod players are Amjad Ali Khan, Ali Akbar Khan, Allauddin Khan, Buddhadev Dasgupta, Sharan Rani Mathur, Ashis Khan, Tejendra Narain Majumder, Radhika Mohan Maitra etc.

4) Sitar

Sitar is a plucked-stringed instrument, a modified form of Veena, flourished between 16th and 17th century and arrived at its present form in 18th century. Sitar is used in Hindustani Classical Music.

It is said that, sitar is an invention by Ustad Amir Khusrau, a member of the court of Alluddin Khalji in 13th century. But there is no proof to prove it. Although, most of the music-critiques believe that sitar originated from the Persian word 'she+tar', means '3 strings'. But sitar has 7 strings. This is because, an opinion is running very gracefully that, sitar is a transformation of ancient 'chitra veena', literally, 'chitra>chitara>sitara>sitar'.

In the Indian classical music sitar is first introduced by Ustad Masid Khan of seni Gharana. His playing-style is

called 'Masid Khani Baaj' and it consists of vilambita laya (slow tempo). These are so many sitar-gharanas in Indian Classical Music and renowned gharana are Seni, Jaipur, Indore, Imdadkahni, Dwarbhanga, Rampur Sahaswan and specially Ustad Allauddin Khan lineage.

Seni gharana had been established by Masid Khan, Jaipur gharana had been established by Rahim Sen and his son Amrit Sen; Indore gharana had been established by Abdul Halim Zafar Khan; Imdadkhani sitar gharana had been established by Sahabdad Hossen Khan; Dwarbhanga gharana had been established by Rameshwar pathak; Rampur Sahaswan gharana had been established by Nasir Ali Khan and Abdur Rahim Khan; Allauddin Khan lineage had been established by Pdt. Ravishankar Choudhury.

A sitar can have 18 to 21 strings, in which 5 main-strings, 2 chikari-strings and rests are tarafdar-strings. Tarafdar strings are generally used to set the mood of a raga at the very beginning of a presentation. The frets are movable. The main-strings and chikari strings run to tuning pegs near the head of the instrument (upper-part). The tarafdar-strings, which are of a variety of

different lengths, pass through small holes in the fretboard to engage with the smaller tuning-pegs that run down the instrument neck.

The instrument has two bridges, the large bridge for the main-strings and chikari-strings and the small bridge for the tarafdar-strings. Materials, used in construction include Teak-wood or Mahogany-wood for the neck and tabli; the resonator is made of special type of gourds; the bridges are made of deer-horn or occasionally camel-bone.

The convex metal-frets are tied along the neck, while enables them to be moved as needed. The Sitar often consists of a small resonating gourd under the pegbox-end of the neck. This balances the weight of the instrument and helps to support it, when it is not being played.

Typical sitar measures about 4 feet in length. The sitar has a deep pear-shaped gourd-body; a long-wide-hallow-wooden-neck; both front and side tuning-pegs and about 21 arched movable frets. Musicians hold the sitar at a 45° angle in their laps while seated. They pluck the strings with a plectrum worn on the right fore-finger

while the left-hand manipulates the strings with subtle pressure in or between the frets and with sideways pulls of the strings.

Sitar is an independent solo instrument. But it may also be used as an accompanying instrument. Sitar used to be generally accompanied to any types of raga-based songs, Ghazals, Bhajans etc.

Well known sitar-players are Ravishankar Choudhury, Nikil Banerjee, Masid Khan, Imdad Khan, Barkatullah Khan, Shahid Parvez etc.

5) Pakhawaj

The pakhawaj is a barrel-shaped, two-headed drum and descendant of the older Mridanga, In the ancient days, Mridanga was made of a special type of clay. Acharya Bharat had categorised Mridanga in the 'Pushkar' group. In the 13th century, all the percussion-instrument were called 'Abaz'. In the 15th century, Sudhakalas, the author of 'Sangeetopanishat- saroddhar', inscribed in his book, that, the new-name of 'Abaz' was 'Pakhawaz', and from 'Pakhawaz', we have got 'Pakhawaj'. Although, most of the music-critiques like to

opine that 'Pakhawaj' means 'Pak+Awaj' , ie, ' The sacred sound'. But it is only a folk theory.

When Abaz left off clay as the main construction-material and adopted wood, the durability of the instrument increased and Mridanga, which was called ' Abaz', that-time at the North-Indian regions and used to accompany prabandha-sangeet, earned a new-name and that is 'Pakka+Abaz', due to the increased lasticity. 'Pakka+Abaz' gradually changed in to 'Pakha+Awaj', ie, Pakhawaj.

The Pakhawaj is a barrel-shaped instrument with an asymmetrical convexity towards the left. It is hallowed out of a block of wood. The wood used is of sheesham, khadir, red sandalwood etc. The total length of Pakhawaj varies between 2 to 2^{1/2} feet, the bulge is of about 90 cm. cricumference. The right face, Which is smaller than the left is the tuning face and emits the higher pitch, its cricumference is about 16 to 20 cm, i.e 6 to 8 inches. The cricumference of the left face is about 25 cm, i.e around 10 inches.

The parchment is prepared from two membranes, the inner complete skin and the outer peripheral ring.

The two faces are held by braids(gajra) and connected by leather straps, which are 16 in number, and called ghaat. The skin, used for parchment is of goat, where as the leather straps are made off buffalo leather. Between the straps there are eight wooden tuning block. For tuning, the block are pushed with a hammer to the left or the right and the pitch can be raised or lowered by this process.

The parchments of the two sides are actually incomplete without pudi-s. The preparation of the pudi of the right face is done with black paste, consists of starch (rice or wheat) mixed with a black powder of various origins. For the left face, a temporary mixture of wheat or barley flour mixed with water is applied at the time of the concert, which is carefully scraped off just after the programme. The pitch of the left-face should be just half of the right-face or at-least it must be the one-third. Application of the mixture on the left-face helps in two ways, i.e, it controls the pitch of the left face and also gives depth and resonance to the tone, which leaves a majestic, sober impression on the listener.

While playing, The player sits with cross-legged, the Pakhawaj is kept horizontally in the ground or in the lap and played with palm and fingers. For the right-handed person, the smaller-end is placed on the right-hand and the large-side is placed on the left-side.

Pakhawaj is generally an accompanying instrument and it is accompanied with Dhrupad. But it is also played as an independent solo instrument.

Some of the great pakhawaj-players are Purushottam Das(Nathdwara), Ayodhya Prasad(Rampur), Ramashish Pathak (Dwarbhanga) , Devakinandan Goswami (Indore), Ramjilal Sharma(Lucknow) etc.

The Pakhawaj-gharanas are Punjab, Rampur , Dwarbhanga, Indore , Lucknow, Gaya, Ayodhya, Benaras, Vishnupur and kolkata (From Murari Mohan Gupta on-words).