

RABINDRA BHARATI UNIVERSITY
VOCAL MUSIC DEPARTMENT

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Teacher - Dr. Sankar Bhattacharyya

Definition of Tala

In music rhythm is the regulation of time for producing an impression of order and balance of mind. It is basically the single unit or beat of the human heart. In music the concept of rhythm or “Tala” has been applied in two viewpoints. It is impossible to think about a life without speed. Likewise a music without speed or rhythm is also impossible. The harmonious movement of the time in music and its continuity in equal form is known as “Laya”. And the single unit of that harmonious movement of time is called “Matra”. So Matra is the exhibitor and indicator of rhythm movement. It has specific importance both in “Nibaddhya” and “Anibaddhya” forms of Indian music. Nibaddhya is a teamed timing cycle with regular and specific units of time measure (Matra) of equal duration. It is the fundamental basis of creating the different Talas of Indian music. Anibaddhya also has Matra but not like Nibaddhya. It is irregular. The starting and ending matra of a teamed timing cycle is known as “Som”. Matras are arranged into groups by regular accents at definite intervals in a harmonious movement are called “Talas”. In other words Tala is an aggregate of the Matras or the equal lengths of a piece of Music.

Origin of Tala

Tala (Time measure), which is an important factor of every school of music (even barbarian vociferation), regulates the relative duration of musical sounds, and as such seems to have considerably engrossed the Indian mind. There are two schools of thought regarding the origin of Tala. One is Pauranik (Mythological) and the other is Prakritik (Scientific). Indian musicologists place their ideas on the platform of ancient mythology. Where as western and modern musicologists prefer the scientific views regarding the origin of rhythm or Tala.

According to 'Shiva purana' Lord Shiva is the sole creator of different aspects of music. After killing the demon Tripurasua, Lord Shiva performed the 'Tandava' dance in the heavenly festivity. His consort Devi Parvati also performed the 'Lasya' dance in that occasion. Both the performances were arranged in regular accents at definite intervals. Both the dancing modes created the basic concept of Tala. And the first letters of the words **Tandav** and **Lasya** created the word **Tala**.

Srimad Bhagbat Puran and Bishnu Puran relates the story of Holy Rasyatra. According to the texts, in the holy occasion of Kartik Purnima, Sri Krishna performed the holy 'Raas' with Srimati Radharani and other Gopis at brindavan. Both Radharani and Sri Krishna called on each other in a critical dance competition. The Gopis assisted both of them in that occasion. The concept of tal originated in that event.

During seventh – eleventh century A.D, Rishi Narada in his text 'Sangeet Makaranda' mentions that five talas – Chaachput, Charchatput, Shatpitaputrak, Sampakestak and Udghatak, manifested from the five faces of Lord Shiva while he was discussing the Agama and Nigama sashtras with Devi Parvati.

These five talas were indicated as Marga Talas by other vaidic musicological texts. On the other hand Agadesh Malla in his text 'Sangeet Churamani' mentions that Tala is the fundamental element of everything in the universe.

The second theory regarding the origin of Tala is the scientific one. Scientists accepts that rhythm is the primordial aspect of nature. Everything from the smallest to the largest in this world is confined in a strict harmonious movement. This is the natural rhythm or Tal. The ideal example of this rhythm is the human heart beat. It is the basic source of the theory regarding origin of Tal in Music.

****To be continued in the next set.**