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242en03

ELEMENTS OF TALA

Music is a performing art which is perceived during the process of creation as against Visual arts like Painting, Sculpture and Architecture, which are perceived after the process of creation is completed. Music is determined by the movement of audible forms that give the illusion of virtual time. Just as Visual arts need a measure of space, Performing arts need a measure of time. In Hindustani music, a composition is set to a particular 'Tala' or beat with definite intervals. Through the medium of 'Tala', an appearance of motion is achieved with the passage of one interval and onset of another. The duration between these intervals gives us the measure of time. This is virtual time that is created within the musical composition.



OBJECTIVE

Through this lesson, the learner would be able to :

- explain the concept and meaning of Tala ;
- define Tala ;
- differentiate between the ancient and present day of Tala ;
- describe the given elements of Tala ;
- state the Bols of the prescribed Talas.

3.1 CONCEPT AND MEANING OF TALA

In a musical composition, Tala indicates the passage of musical time. During this process, an appearance of motion is achieved that gives music the nature of a living form. In Hindustani music, Tala has been considered as the foundation upon which music is established. The composition and elaboration of a Raga is rendered within the fixed cycle of the Tala. Even though the cycle of the Tala is fixed, the Raga appears to flower within that cycle and reaching the Sam of the Tala in different ways after the completion of each cycle becomes an end in itself.



Notes

3.2 DEFINITION

The word 'Tala' finds its derivation from the Sanskrit root 'tal', meaning the base or pivot upon which a thing rests. In Sangeet Ratnakar, defining 'Tala' Pt. Sharngadev says, 'Tala' has been derived from the Sanskrit root 'tal', which is the base upon which an object is fixed. In the same way, 'Tala' is the base upon which vocal, instrumental music and dance are established.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 3.1

1. As a performing art, in what way is music perceived?
2. How are visual arts perceived?
3. As against a measure of space in the case of visual arts, what do Performing arts need?
4. What is the base upon which vocal, instrumental music and dance are established?

3.3 ELEMENTS OF TALA

In ancient times, ten elements of Tala were in practice, namely - Kaal, Marga, Kriya, Anga, Graha, Jati, Kala, Laya, Yati and Prastara which are collectively known as 'Tala Dash Prana'. Present day elements of Tala include Avartan, Matra, Laya, Bol, Theka, Vibhag, Sam, Khali and Tali. To be able to identify and follow any Tala, a knowledge of these elements is required. They are being described below:

3.3.1 Avartan - The complete cycle of a given tala is called Avartan. It can be repeated more than once. Example, the Avartan of Teen Tala

Matra	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Theka/	Dha Dhin Dhin Dha				Dha Dhin Dhin Dha				Dha Tin Tin Ta				Ta Dhin Dhin Dha			
Bol	×				2				0				3			

3.3.2 Matra - The unit of Tala which indicates the measure of musical time is called Matra. Different Talas can have the same number of Matras. For example, ChauTala and EkTala, both have twelve Matras. However, both are used in different forms of music. ChauTala is used with Dhrupad and EkTala with Khayal. ChauTala is usually played on Pakhawaj, while EkTala is usually played on the tabla. Their tools are suited to the respective forms that they accompany. The notations for Matras and Bolis of ChauTala and EkTala are given below:

Elements of Tala

ChauTala :
(Pakhawaj)

Matra	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Theka/	Dha	Dha	Din	ta	kit	Dha	Din	ta	tit	kat	gadi	gan
Bol	×		0		2		0		3		4	

EkTala :
(Tabla)

Matra	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Theka/	Dhin	Dhin	Dhage	tirkir	tu	na	kat	ta	Dhage	tirkir	Dhin	na
Bol	×		0		2		0		3		4	

3.3.3 Laya - The tempo of the musical time is referred to as 'Laya'. There are three types of

Laya - Vilambit, Madhya and Drut.

- Vilambit laya - A slow tempo laya is called Vilambit.
- Madhya laya - When the tempo is double that of Vilambit, it becomes Madhya laya.
- Drut laya - When the tempo is double that of Madhya, it becomes Drut laya.

3.3.4 Bol- The words used to specify the sound produced while playing a Tala are called 'Bol'. These are mnemonic syllables like Dha, Dhin or tirkir etc. The ancient term for these was 'Patakshara'.

3.3.5 Theka - The entire group of Bols or words of a Tala constitutes the Theka. Just as a 'Bandish' or composition in a musical form can be elaborated, Theka is the basic structure of a Tala which can be elaborated further using various 'tukde' and 'tihai'.

3.3.6 Vibhag - The Theka of a Tala is distributed into divisions called 'Vibhag'. On the basis of the number of Matras in a Tala, different Talas have different number of divisions. For example, TeenTala has sixteen Matras that are divided into four Vibhags, Rupaka has seven Matras that are divided into three Vibhags. The Vibhags may or may not be of equal duration. For example, in the case of TeenTala, all four Vibhags are of equal duration, that is, of four Matras each:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Dha	Dhin	Dhin	Dha	Dha	Dhin	Dhin	Dha	Dha	Tin	Tin	Ta	Ta	Dhin	Dhin	Dha
×				2				0				3			

In the case of Rupaka Tala, two Vibhags are of two Matras and one is of three Matras :



Notes



Notes

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Tin	Tin	Na	Dhin	Na	Dhin	Na
×			2		3	

3.3.7 Sam - The starting Matra of a Tala upon which the entire emphasis of the rhythm is laid is called 'Sam'. It is shown by the symbol (×) in Bhatkhande notation system. Here, it should be noted that in the previous example of Rupaka Tala, the 'Sam' has been shown on the first Matra. However, while rendering the Tala orally, the first Matra is shown as 'Khali'. This should be treated as an exception because usually, the same is shown as 'Tali'? In practice, both singing and playing of the Tabla starts simultaneously from this Matra, therefore it has been given as 'Sam'.

3.3.8 Khali - That Matra of a Tala which acts as a counterpoise for the 'Sam' to balance the rhythmic cycle is called 'Khali'. It is shown by the symbol (0) in Bhatkhande notation system. When the Theka of a Tala is recited orally along with hand gestures, Khali is shown with palm facing upwards. Khali can be more than one.

3.3.9 Tali - The Matra of a Tala that indicates the place of striking is called 'Tali'. These are usually the starting Matras of a Vibhag and are more than one. Thus, the Sam becomes the first Tali, and the subsequent ones are numbered as 2,3 and so on excluding Khali.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 3.2

1. What is the unit of Tala which indicates the measure of musical time called?
2. What is the tempo of the musical time referred to as?
3. By what name the complete cycle of a given Tala that can be repeated more than once known ?
4. What are the words used to specify the sound produced while playing a Tala called?
5. What does the entire group of Bolis or words of a Tala constitute?
6. What is the starting Matra of a Tala upon which the entire emphasis of the rhythm is laid called?

3.4 BOLS OF PRESCRIBED TALAS

Teen Tala

Matra	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Theka/	Dha Dhin Dhin Dha				Dha Dhin Dhin Dha				Dha Tin Tin Ta				Ta Dhin Dhin Dha			
Bol	×				2				0				3			

EkTala

Matra	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Theka/ Bol	Dhin	Dhin	Dhage tirkat		tu	na	kat	ta	Dhage tirkat		Dhin	na
Bol	×		0		2		0		3		4	

Dadra

Matra	1	2	3	4	5	6
Theka/ Bol	Dha	Dhi	Na	Dha	Ti	Na
Bol	×			0		

Kaharwa

Matra	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Theka/ Bol	Dha	Ge	Na	Ti	Na	Ka	Dhi	Na
Bol	×				0			

Jhap Tala

Matra	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Theka/ Bol	Dhi	Na	Dhi	Dhi	Na	Ti	Na	Dhi	Dhi	Na
Bol	×		2			0		3		



INTEXT QUESTIONS 3.3

1. Apart from the Sam, on which Matras do the Talis come in TeenTala ?
2. What is the number of Matras in EkTala?
3. On which Matra does the Khali in Dadra come?
4. What is the number of Matras in JhapTala ?



WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT

An integral part of Hindustani music, ‘Tala’, constitutes rhythm, which occurs naturally in life processes like heart beat and breathing. Thus, it transforms symbolically the natural movement of life into the musical form. This movement gives an illusion of virtual time. The passage of an interval and onset of another interval of a Tala gives us a measure of the virtual time that is created within the musical form.

Tala is the pivot on which Hindustani music has been established. Its elements include Avartan, Matra, Laya, Bol, Theka, Vibhag, Sam, Khali and Tali.



Notes



Notes



TERMINAL EXERCISE

1. How does Tala give an appearance of motion?
2. Define Tala according to Sangeet Ratnakar. What were the elements of Tala in ancient times?
3. Can different Talas have same number of Matras ? Illustrate with example.
4. What is Laya ?
5. Can the Vibhags of a Tala be of unequal duration? Illustrate using example.
6. What do you understand by Khali and Tali?
7. Give the Bols of any two of the following: TeenTala, Kaharwa, Dadra, JhapTala, EkTala.



ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS

3.1

1. As a performing art, music is perceived during the process of creation.
2. Visual arts are perceived after the process of creation.
3. As against a measure of space in the case of visual arts, performing arts need a measure of time.
4. Tala is the base upon which vocal, instrumental music and dance are established.

3.2

1. Matra
2. Laya
3. Avartan
4. Bol
5. Theka
6. Sam

3.3

1. Five and thirteen
2. Twelve
3. Four
4. Ten

GLOSSARY

1. Bandish - a musical composition
2. Dhrupad - a form of Indian classical music that is accompanied by Pakhawaj
3. Khayal- a form of Indian classical music that is accompanied by Tabla
4. Performing art - presentational art to be perceived during process of creation
5. Pivot - a fixed point on which an object is balanced
6. Tihai - a particular group of notes or Bols that is presented three times
7. Tukde - groups of Bols played on the Tabla to bring variety within the Theka
8. Visual art - art to be perceived (through eyes) after the process of creation
9. Virtual time - not actual time, but the time created within the musical form



Notes