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BRIEF STUDY OF MUSIC IN VEDA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SAMA VEDA

Vedic period is the most ancient period of the history of Indian culture that provides information about the structure of ancient culture of India. This information is available in the form of the literary content of the Vedas. According to historians, Vedic period is considered around 500 B.C. There are four Vedas in all – Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, Sama Veda and Atharva Veda. Among the four Vedas, Sama Veda is considered as the origin of Indian music.

During that period, music was the medium for prayer in religious ceremonies as well as entertainment and social occasions. The development of notes originated in the Vedic period itself. Initially three Vedic notes were used-Udatta, Anudatta and Svarita. Later, they developed into seven Vedic note which finally gave way to the Laukik or Gandharva notes. Various musical instruments were also used during the Vedic period. Among stringed instruments, different types of Veena were prevalent. Also, leather instruments such as Dundubhi, wind instruments such as Tunava and metallic instruments such as Aghati were prevalent during that period.



OBJECTIVE

By studying this lesson, learners will be able to :

- explain the system of music during Vedic period;
- write the methodology of singing–playing during yajnas;
- describe the development of Sama Vedic seven Svaras derived from the basic Svaras of Vedic music – Udatta, Anudatta and Svarita etc.;
- identify the fourfold instruments i.e., Tata, Sushir, Avanadya and Ghana of vedic period.



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6.1 THE SYSTEM OF MUSIC PREVALENT DURING VEDIC PERIOD

During Vedic period, music was used liberally for religious ceremonies and social occasions. The music used for Yajnas (Vedic) was bound by strict rules, whereas that used for social occasions (Laukik) was according to the interests of people. Since Vedic Richas or Mantras were considered as energising, powerful and divine, they were sung at various yajnas using different procedures and methodology for fulfilling worldly and spiritual desires. Keeping this factor in mind, such Brahmins were considered as suitable for the purpose who were good singers with a naturally melodious voice, good instrumentalists and experienced in the knowledge of Vedas and Vedic rituals. Apart from these qualities, it was essential for them to receive training orally in Vedic knowledge. For Yajnas and religious ceremonies, Brahmins were given specific training in music. This training was given from father to son, Guru to Shishya, or to students of a Gurukul in a group. Ashrams and Samaparishads were established to gain knowledge of characteristics of melody and pronunciation in music. This rule bound Vedic music can be called the classical form of music of Vedic period.

In the backdrop of Laukik music, Lok Gathas and songs in praise of brave men and kings such as 'Gathas', 'Narashansi', 'Raibhya' etc., that were used both for religious and social ceremonies were prevalent. Since the singers of 'Gatha' sang along with the Veena instrument, they were called 'Gathagayak', 'Veenagathin' or 'Veenaganagn'.

In this period, dance was performed in an open surrounding before a gathering in which both men and women participated. According to the treatise 'Vajasneyi Sanhita', during this period, group dances like Rajju, Arun, Prakriti, Puspa and Basant dance etc. were prevalent. In this way, apart from the classical form which was used for religious purposes according to rules specified in Vedas, music was also used for social ceremonies according to interests of people in the Vedic period.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 6.1

1. On what occasions was music used in Vedic period?
2. Which Brahmins were considered as suitable for singing Vedic Mantras?
3. What were the mediums through which training in music was given in Vedic period?
4. Mention the types of songs used in Laukik music.
5. What were the singers who sang along with Veena instrument called?
6. Name the group dances mentioned in 'Vajansaneyi Sanhita'.

6.2 THE ORIGIN OF MUSIC, SAMA VEDA

Among the four Vedas, Sama Veda represents music. For this reason, Sama Veda



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has been called the origin of Indian music and has been considered as foremost among the four Vedas. As Lord Krishna has said in the Gita – ‘Vedanam samavedo’smi. Sama is sung on the basis of Richas, i.e. when the Rig Vedic Mantras are sung melodiously, they are called Sama. According to ‘Chhandogya Upanishad’, ‘Sama’ has been derived from ‘Sa’ + ‘amah’. ‘Sa’ denotes Richa and ‘amah’ denotes Alap, i.e., singing of Richas along with Alap. Therefore the singing of Vedic Mantras with melody and rhythm is called Sama Gana.

Sama Veda has two parts – Archik Sanhita and Gana Sanhita. Archik Sanhita again has two parts Purvarchik and Uttararchik. In Purvarchik, Sama Gana is done solo using a single Richa, whereas in Uttararchik, it is done using groups of three Richas. Along with the main singer, other singers are also present in this. In this way, the Richas or Mantra was prominent in Purvarchik and Uttararchik. However, with the passage of time, an increase in religious rituals saw a simultaneous rise in prominence of melody and the second part of Sama Veda, Gana Sanhita came into being. Though it was based on Archik Sanhita, the element of melody was given priority. There are four parts of Gana Sanhita – Gramageya Gana, Aranyageya Gana, Uha Gana and Uhya Gana. In Gramageya Gana, easier metre bound Sanskrit language was used instead of difficult Vedic use. Aranyageya Gana was meant to be sung in wilderness. Uha and Uhya Gana both were considered as secret forms that could only be sung by one who could decipher the meaning of Upanishads. Thus, Archik consisted of the literary aspect and Gana consisted of the melodic aspect of Sama. For the purpose of singing in Yajnas, Sama Gana has been divided into five or seven Bhaktis. Five bhaktis are (1) Prastava (2) Udgeeth (3) Pratihara (4) Updrava (5) Nidhan. Two other Bhaktis are used in some Samas, they are ‘Hinkar’ and ‘Pranava’. The Brahmins who were designated to sing these Bhaktis according to set rules were referred to as Prastota, Udgata and Pratiharta.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 6.2

1. What is meant by ‘Sama’?
2. What is the difference between Purvarchik and Uttararchik?
3. ‘Gana Sanhita’ has been divided into which parts?
4. Name the five Bhaktis of Sama Gana.
5. Name the Brahmins designated to sing Bhaktis according to set rules.
6. What is the etymology of Sama?

6.3 SVARAS USED IN SAMA GANA

In the beginning, only three Svaras were used for Sama Gana, viz – Udatta, Anudatta and Svarita. Udatta denoted high, Anudatta low and Svarita was medium, in which there was a combination of high and low. To indicate these three



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Svaras, the numbers 1, 2 and 3 were used for Udatta, Anudatta and Svarita respectively above syllables of Mantras. The usage of Udatta, Anudatta and Svarita Svaras gave rise to three fold structure of Sama Gana – Archik Gana, Gathik Gana and Samik Gana. When only one note was used, it constituted Archik, when two notes were used it constituted Gathik and when three notes were used it constituted Samik. According to ‘Tattariya Pratishakhya’, slowly from these three notes, seven Sama Vedic Svaras developed.

They were – Krushta, Prathama, Dvitiya, Tritiya, Chaturtha, Mandra and Atisvarya. They are comparable to the Laukik Svaras Ma, Ga, Re, Sa, Dha, Ni, Pa respectively. Their relationship can be understood from the table given below:-

Relation of Vedic Svaras to Laukik Svaras

S. No.	Sama Vedic Svvara	Laukik Svvara
1.	Krushta	Ma
2.	Prathama	Ga
3.	Dvitiya	Re
4.	Tritiya	Sa
5.	Chaturtha	Dha
6.	Mandra	Ni
7.	Atisvarya	Pa



INTEXT QUESTIONS 6.3

1. What is meant by Udatta, Anudatta and Svarita?
2. What are the terms used for singing with the usage of one, two and three notes in Vedic terminology?
3. Name the seven Svaras used in Vedic music.

6.4 INSTRUMENTS OF VEDIC PERIOD

Four types of instruments have been mentioned during Vedic period – (1) stringed instruments (2) wind instruments (3) leather instruments (4) metallic instruments. These four types of instruments were later called Tata, Sushir, Avanadya and Ghana instruments.

Among stringed instruments of Vedic period, Veena held a prominent place. These

were different types of Veena such as, Bana Veena, Karkari Veena, Kanda Veena, Apghatalika, Godha Veena etc. Bana Veena was also called Maha Veena'. It consisted of hundred strings During Mahavrat Yajna, this Veena was played using a wooden stick. Among wind instruments the name 'Tunava' has been used often for flute. Nadi was another synonym for flute Among leather instruments, Dundubhi and Bhumi-Dundubhi were specifically important. Dhundubhi was a type of drum which was made by stretching leather over wood and was played using a stick. This was called 'Ahanan'. Bhumi-Dundubhi was made by digging a pit in the ground and covering it with leather. It was played using the tail of an or. Panava, Pinga, Godha, Patah and Gargar etc. were instruments of this category. A category by the name of Gadak was also present. In metallic instruments, the name of Aghati finds mention, which has also been considered the same as Apghatalik and Kanda Veena according to some view points.



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INTEXT QUESTIONS 6.4

1. How many types of instruments were, present during Vedic period. Name them.
2. What is meant by 'Maha Veena'?
3. Explain 'Bhumi – Dundubhi'.



WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT

In Vedic period, Laukik and classical, both forms of music have been mentioned. In this period, music had a respectful place in society. Indian culture of Vedic era consisted of four Vedas – Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, Sama Veda and Atharva Veda. When the Mantras of Rig Veda were sung melodiously, they were called Sama. The two parts of Sama were called 'Archik Sanhita' and 'Gana Sanhita'. In the beginning, the Svaras used for Sama were Udatta, Anudatta and Svarita. Later, these Svaras developed into seven Vedic Svaras. Slowly, these seven Svaras gave way to Laukik or Gandharva Svaras. During Vedic period the development of fourfold instruments had taken place. Among them, Veena, Dundubhi etc. were some such prominent instruments that were used along with Sama Gana during Yajna ceremonies. Thus, from the aspect of development of music, the Vedic period was very prosperous and sophisticated that later enriched the cultural heritage of Indian music.



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TERMINAL EXERCISE

1. Give a brief description of the system of music prevalent during the Vedic period.
2. What was the form of musical training in Vedic period?
3. While explaining the word 'Sama', mention its various parts.
4. Describe in detail the three notes that were used in the beginning in Sama Gana.
5. Describe the development of seven notes in Vedic period.
6. What were the fourfold instruments of Vedic period.
7. Describe the prominent stringed and leather instruments prevalent during the Vedic period.



ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS

6.1

1. religious ceremonies and social occasions
2. good singers with melodious voice, good instrumentalists and experienced in the knowledge of Vedas and Vedic rituals.
3. training was given from father to son, Guru to Shishya, to students of a Gurukul in a group and in Ashrams and Samaparishads
4. Gathas, narashansi, Raibhya
5. Veenagathin, Gathagayak, Veenagangn
6. Rajju, Arun, Prakriti, Pushpa and Basant dance

6.2

1. singing of Vedic Mantras with melody and rhythm
2. in Purvarchik, Sama Gana is done solo using a single Richa, where as in Uttararchik it is done using groups of three Richas by more than one singer
3. Gramageya Gana, Aranyageya Gana, Uha Gana and Uhya Gana
4. Prastava, Udgeeth, Pratihara, Updrava, Nidhan

5. Prastota, Udgata, Pratiharta
6. Sa + amah

6.3

1. high, low and medium Svaras
2. Archik, Gathik, Samik
3. Krushta, Prathama, Dvitiya, Tritiya, Chaturtha, Mandra, Atisvarya

6.4

1. four types of instruments were present- (1) stringed (2) wind (3) leather (4) metallic
2. hundred stringed Veena named 'Bana'
3. Bhumi-Dumdubhi was made by digging a pit in the ground and covering it with leather

GLOSSARY

1. Atharva Veda – Vedas of Indian culture
2. Rig Veda – Vedas of Indian culture
3. Yajur Veda – Vedas of Indian culture
4. Sama Veda – Vedas of Indian culture
5. Archik Sanhita – first Sanhita of Sama Veda
6. Purvarchik – first part of Archik Sanhita of Sama Veda
7. Uttararchik – second part of Archik Sanhita of Sama Veda
8. Gana Sanhita – second Sanhita of Sama Veda
9. Gramageya Gana – parts of Gana Sanhita
10. Aranyageya Gana – parts of Gana Sanhita
11. Uha Gana – parts of Gana Sanhita
12. Uhya Gana – parts of Gana Sanhita
13. Prastava – Bhaktis of Sama Gana
14. Udgeeth – Bhaktis of Sama Gana

**Notes**



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| 15. Pratihar | – Bhaktis of Sama Gana |
| 16. Updrava | – Bhaktis of Sama Gana |
| 17. Nidhan | – Bhaktis of Sama Gana |
| 18. Hinkar | – Bhaktis of Sama Gana |
| 20. Prastota | – singers of Bhaktis of Sama Gana |
| 21. Udgata | – singers of Bhaktis of Sama Gana |
| 22. Pratiharta | – singers of Bhaktis of Sama Gana |
| 23. Archik | – use of one note in Sama Gana |
| 24. Gathik | – use of two notes in Sama Gana |
| 25. Samik | – use of three notes in Sama Gana |
| 26. Anudatta | – Vedic Svaras |
| 27. Udatta | – Vedic Svaras |
| 28. Svarita | – Vedic Svaras |
| 29. Tata | – stringed instruments |
| 30. Sushir | – wind instruments |
| 31. Avanadya | – leather instruments |
| 32. Ghana | – metallic instruments |
| 33. Gatha | – Laukik in Vedic period |
| 34. Narashansi | – Laukik in Vedic period |
| 35. Raibhya | – Laukik in Vedic period |
| 36. Gathagayak | – Laukik in Vedic period |
| 37. Veenagathin | – singers of Gatha who sang along with the Veena instrument |
| 39. Rajju | – group dance prevalent in Vedic period |
| 40. Arun | – group dance prevalent in Vedic period |
| 41. Prakriti | – group dance prevalent in Vedic period |
| 42. Pushpa | – group dance prevalent in Vedic period |
| 43. Basant | – group dance prevalent in Vedic period |