

## **Marathi Natya Sangeet - A Unique Musical Expression**

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Natya sangeet is a very unique and peculiar feature of Marathi Stage. Natya sangeet itself contains various forms of Classical, semi classical, light, devotional, folk music & still its own uniqueness remains as it is. Natya sangeet is presented in a way that it remains in accordance with Classical Music; the flow of the script of the play; enhancing the dramaticity and still the drama remains drama and never turns into a concert of classical music. This is a very peculiar feature and specific feature of only Maharashtra as this kind of expression of drama is not seen in any other states of India.

The word Natya Sangeet itself indicates the two meanings within as Natya i.e. Dramaticity and Sangeet i.e. Music. The important feature during progression of Natya sangeet is to maintain the weightage and percentage of both the factors; equal. No one should overcome the other or dominate it. From aesthetics and psychological studies, this balance increases the anxiousness of audience to watch further & achieves high state of enjoyment.

As everybody knows; sound is better medium to express feelings than words by both the aspects viz: scope and depth. Obviously it helps for enrichment of intensifying the feels expressed through the script of drama.

As it is a well known fact that music is a higher level expression than any other science or art.

One should be certainly aware that music (Sangeet) included in drama is complementary to drama portion of it & goes hand in hand. Though Natya sangeet and classical forms reveal with the expression of the Music, some basic differences do exist.

The basic thing which bifurcates this sense of presentation of both the forms is, drama is an audiovisual poetry; in short. This basic aspect and flow of the script has its own posture, own pace. Singing ability should be complementary for this pace. This is not required in classical music and hence the speed and rhythm which may suites with classical music may not be appropriate in drama.

As constantly said above, music included here is to support dramaticity & its not just for sake of music. Obviously its expected that actor uses both script & music in a very balanced way, intensify the feel of script by pronunciation of words, paragraphs or with emphasized words, accents, acting, body language. Same is the expectation/need of music here which is totally different than mere music or specific form of music being expressed in concerts or folk music expression. In this case therefore, tune, speed, tempo, mood, overall scene/situation at stage, type of conversation to be put forth, rhythm, swaras, sequence of swaras, elaborativeness & scope of elaboration, time for actor/actress to perform the scene are keenly needs be maintained or decided in a way which will support the peculiar scene or situation of the play. . Intonation

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As basically music is included in the drama to support dramaticity and not merely for the sake of inclusion of music. Obviously it is not expected that as an actor intensified the feel of the script by pronunciation of the words or sentences or paragraphs, by accents, face acting along with his body language; same is expected via music. Obviously the tune, speed, tempo, rhythm, sequence of swaras, elaborativeness or scope of elaboration should be maintained or decided in a way which will support that peculiar scene of the play. Intonation is a very useful and important factor for expression and intensifying in Rasa through both prose as well as music i.e. songs. Appropriate rhythm and speed of the prose within the script also counts the influence of the drama as a whole.

Natya sangeet in short could be described as a perfect mean of various forms of music with beautiful expression which in turn attains the high entertaining capacity. It is mean of expression which can easily attract any level of audience & still it is having strong cohesion with drama throughout. Stating this, a good classical singer may not be a necessarily good Natya Sangeet singer and vice versa.

Unfortunately most of the times it is seen /observed that the good singers ignore towards Dramatical part of it and a good actor may ignore the musical side of Natya Sangeet, which should be actually and ideally avoided.

By enlarge some of the key parameters regarding the presentation of Natya Sangeet should be taken care of as follows.

1. Speed /Rhythm:-It includes both prose and songs; but basically this deals and influences the rendition of songs.
2. It should be followed very much cautiously as the speed in which classical music is presented may not suit with for presentation of Natya Sangeet.
3. It should be simpler or simplest, but catchy as the basic need is to entertain a common man who may not have introduced to classical music. Obviously it is realized that use of classical ragas or tunes or forms could be done but it should be in accordance the script and flow of it.
4. Composition: - composition of the tunes should be useful and complementary for the script of the play along eth wordings of the songs and overall feel of the drama.
5. Elaboration: - Scope of elaboration obviously differs in classical music and Natya Sangeet as classical music has no background during rendition which is not the case with the Natya Sangeet. It obviously comes to the notice the things which are appreciated during rendition of classical music may not be suitable or appreciated during rendition of Natya sangeet. Though in both the cases the raga; tala, the wording the meaning may be same, the scope of elaboration of both styles differs.
6. Throw of the words: -As in classical music, there is no scope for bola laps and bol tans in Natya Sangeet, but Natya Sangeet could be elaborated on the similar patterns called Varieties. Their rendition, pronounciatons. volume control. throw of Swaras should be in a way as if the words remain expressive towards the meaning of expressivity of the script.
7. Start of the songs: - The song should be placed at a situation in the play so that it will look as if it has emerged from the script and not merely added for the sake of music. Song should be appropriately , properly and inseparably intermingled with the script of the play .Flow of the script should be complemented by the songs and music or in fact the feel should be intensified instead of getting the feel that script is getting cut or disturbed.
8. Elaboration of Ragas : - Though it is depicted by most of the Granthas that major notes offers you pleasant feels while minor notes offer you soft feels .According to this fact even if some ragas or

classical compositions are used to compose Natya Sangeet, the purity of the raga ; which is specially and awarely followed during the rendition of classical music , may not be that strictly observed in Natya sangeet but the base of the composition is maintained nicely.

Nobody should be indulged in a discussion of a problem whether drama is of more importance or music; but one should develop the presentation style for rendition of Natya Sangeet very brilliantly so that the Weightage and percentage of dramaticity and musicality is balanced and none will dominate the other which in turn will increase the impact of the play as a whole.

This orientation of balance of dramaticity and musicality was properly maintained in previous musical plays in earlier times. Later many new trends and thoughts went on adding in the stream of Natya Sangeet.

To have the details of the same let us have a look of the historical development of Marathi Natya Sangeet.

Era -1 - 1880 to 1889 – This time period is recognized as ‘Era of Kirloskari Sangeet’. This mostly attributes to its designer Mr. Annasaheb Kirloskar. Annasaheb himself was a very good singer, a skilled writer, perfect director & having mastery over many languages. All these skills were well supported by his vision, foresight and committed efforts. He has devised many beautiful yet simple poetic renditions and chosen intelligently subject/themes for play. His dedicated efforts towards music, poetic compositions & towards Natya sangeet as a whole gave different dimensions & class to all these aspects. Also, it brought a revolution in terms of view of audience & made this type of music more popular.

An important milestone of his career was the establishment of his own natya samstha named ‘Kirloskar Natak Mandali’. This natak company became very popular in short time and was appreciated and accepted heavily by society as a whole.

First play performed by this company was ‘Sangeet Shakuntal’ at pune in ‘Anandodbhav Theatre’ on 31<sup>st</sup> October, 1880 & was followed by two more plays viz. ‘Sangeet Saubhadra’ and ‘Sangeet Ramarajya Viyog’

These plays brought about a revolution on Marathi stage. Because of the rich and dignified presentation, the plays, the songs, the music style and even Annasaheb himself received tremendous appreciation and prestige in the society. The experiments done by him regarding presentation of Natya and Sangeet in all these place were quite successful.

Due to his sincere efforts, devotion and rich contribution he is called ‘Janak of Marathi Sangeet Rangabhoomi’.

Annasaheb Kirloskar brought some important changes on the stage. The first and the most important one was bifurcation of the actors from the anchor. Previously anchor used to be the key person in revealing the whole play along with anchoring and rendering the songs. From ‘Sangeet Shakuntala’ the actor started rendering the songs allotted to them along with their dialogues.

In Sangeet Shakuntala no. of songs were evident and were related to script. Also, the songs were attractive and were of varied types and its pace was apt w.r.t momentum of the script. Because of all these factors, overall performance and presentation raised the success level, expected by the writer and could reach the climax of optimum presentation level also.

Annasaheb Kirloksar used various vruttas i.e. versus namely Saaki, Kamada, Dindi, Arya, Katav etc. which were taken from basically Naradiya Kirtan Parampara of Maharashtra. Also the taalās used were like Dhumali, Dadra, Keherwa which were of fast speed, less matras and catchy. For certain compositions the popular tunes were used which were simple to grasp and popular at that time. Even for some songs he used some popular tunes from Karnataka music. The key contributor to this success along with Annasaheb were Mr. Moroba Wagholikar, Mr. Balkoba Natekar, Mr. Chintoba Gurav and so many of his other contemporaries from his company.

Time Period from 1890-1910 – In 1890, Waikar Sangeet Mandali, Patankar Sangeet Mandali, Mr. Shreepad Krishna Kolkhatkar, Mr. Govind Ballal Deval also contributed to marathi stage but the efforts were upto limited extent and no quest regarding classical music was developed in the common people as an audience.

Era -2 - Time Period from 1911 to 1920 – This time period could also be referred to as ‘Golden Era’ for Maharashtrian natya sangeet. The next play, ‘Sangeet Manapmaan’ brought about many changes in overall style of presentation of natya sangeet.

The speciality of this drama is this that there were different persons acted as writer and music director as against previous tradition. Mr. Krishnaji Prabhakar Khadilkar, the writer of the play, appointed Mr/ Govindrao Tembe separately as a music director for this play.

For the first time the songs were added to emphasize on the musical aspect of the drama which actually help to turn the attitude of the audience. The audience started looking towards the songs from the aspect of gayaki aang.

Govindrao Tembe did not composed any new tunes but he used the famous tunes from North India i.e. Thumri, Chaiti, Kajri, Savan, Zhula, Dadra, Kawaali etc. Though these tunes were of semiclassical types, they never proved to be vulgar or provoking on the stage. In fact, they proved much more fascinating and attractive to capture the attention of the audience.

All the experiments gave different dimensions to the presentation of Natya sangeet as a whole and thus Mr . Govindrao Tembe is honoured as ‘First Music Director’ of ‘Marathi Natya Sangeet.’

After ‘Sanget Manapman’, the next play, ‘Sangeet Swayanwar’ again by Krishnaji Prabhakar Khadilkar, brought a revolution on ‘Marathi Stage’. The Music direction for this play was by ‘Gayanacharya Pandit Bhaskarbua Bakhale’.

Bakhalebua himself was a versatile singer and actor. With his great knowledge and experience; he used almost all Classical compositions of very famous and reputed raagas for the music direction of this play.

The songs from the play are very much attractive, easy to grasp; learn and render. The easiness came in existence due to aesthetical presentation along with certain modifications done in them. Easiness came into existence due to aesthetical presentation along with certain modifications done in them. This fascinated audience and even made them curious to know original bandish of the song and in turn indirectly were attracted towards classical & semi-classical forms of music. Thus Marathi stage & Natyasangeet was flourished with virgin and real essence of North Indian Classical Music with an aesthetical presentation of the songs and really gave a different dimension but without making it as a typical musical concert.

Authentic guidance regarding aesthetical presentation of the songs by Pt. Bharaskarbua Bakhale gave birth to a rich trend on marathi stage called as ‘Gandharva Parampara’.

Many other artists like Bai Sundarabai, Master Krishnarao etc also contributed during and after this period but the impact of gayaki & trends of presentation by Bal Gandharva & Gandharva Natak Mandali remained evident and are followed till today. Even today, these are used as primary guidelines & some are meticulously followed as is which was devised and used by Pt. Bhaskarbua Bakhale.

Era 3 and 4 - Time Period from 1921 To 1934 & 1934 To 1958 – Many authors/music directors/actors like Mama Varerkar, Veer Vamanrao Joshi, V.C. Gurjar, Vasant Desai, Swatantryaveer Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, Mr. Pendharkar, Chhota Gandharva ,Hirabai Badodekar, Keshavrao Bhole, Dr. Vasantrao Deshpande, Pt. Ram Marathe, Pt. Jitendra Abhisheki, Pt. Bhimsen Joshi, Jayamala Shiledar and many other contributed to marathi stage. Many new methods and experiments were also tried on Marathi Stage in the forthcoming period and the legends did influence the a mrathi stage & its music. Let us concentrate on few

of them with some examples. The relationship between classical music and natya sangeet could be studied with the help of many factors.

Accompanists also played a very vital role to keep the tradition alive with a dignified level. Mr. Keshavrao Kamble, Ustad Kadarbaksh, Pt. Haribhau Deshpande, Ustad Ahmedjan Thirakwa, Sanjay Deshpande, Pt. Vinayakrao Thorat, Mr. Govindrao Patwardhan, Mr. Bhojraj Salvi, Mr. Keshavrao Navelkar, Pt. Babanrao Gokhale, Pt. Aantrao Phatak, Mr. Rajiv Paranjape and many more contributed a lot to Marathi Sangeet Natak. by being the accompanists on Organ, Tabla, violin.

Many tunes are used to compose Marathi Natya Sangeet are mainly s follows.

1. Typical Marathi folk tunes viz: Lavani, Powada, Abhang tunes form Varkari Kirtan as well as many verdicts and tunes from Naradiya Kirtan style
2. South Indian tunes – E.g. Tunes for the songs Chandrika Hi Janu, Ughicha ka Kanta are taken from South Indian Tunes.
3. Tunes from Urdu, Parsee Plays – E.g. Taj-e-Wafa etc.
4. Many different verdicts were used viz: Saki, Dindi, Aarya, Kamada, Katav, etc, and so on. Out of these form, Saki and Dindi are still famous & dindi is apt w.r.t pace of play & been very nicely used by various directors, music literate people in Natya sangeet. E.g. Saki – Daudat he mrug chali aapki. Dindi – Bahut din nach bhetalo sundarila.
5. The use of classical, semi classical and light or folk tunes from some other regions of India wer also used.
6. Some totally new tunes were created and used to intensify the shades of feels and the rasas included in the script. E.g. Patit tu pavana, tochi vishwambhar.

The accompanists and accompaniment should be complementary and complementing to the singers and actors on the stage as it will offer the overall impact of the drama cause it is a team work.

To appreciate the Natya sangeet also needs the awareness and realization of the role of good script , good singers ,good actors, good writers ,good directors , and of course the good audience as it is a team work all together.

Hope this will lead to a grand era of Natya sangeet once again in the upcoming times.

Thank you.