



## 5



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## NOTATION SYSTEM OF HINDUSTANI MUSIC

Indian music is based on imagination. Musicians have created literary or poetic compositions and presented them in the form of Khayal, Dhrupad, Thumri and other forms of music in different Ragas and Talas for expressing sentiments only through their art. In order to preserve such presentations in written form so that they do not get lost along with the musicians, notations using different symbols came into being from time to time. It is through the medium of notations only that a collection of compositions by musicians of yore is available today also. Therefore, it is important for us to gain a detailed knowledge of notation.



### OBJECTIVE

After studying this lesson, learners would be able:

- describe the importance of notation;
- explain the history and development of notation from Vedic period to Medieval period;
- describe the importance of notation in Modern period;
- explain the Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande notation system prevalent in present times.

### 5.1 THE MEANING AND CONCEPT OF NOTATION

In Hindi, notation is called 'Svaralipi.' This is formed of two words 'Svara', which is note and 'Lipi', which means script or the written form of any language. Thus,



## Notes

Svaralipi is the script of notes. Just as in a language, different lines, dots and various types of symbols are used for Hindi, Urdu, Tamil etc., similarly in music also, the symbols, lines or numerals used to portray the written form of pure, modified notes, different registers and various Talas such as Teentala, Jhaptala, Ektala etc are generally called notation. Not only notes and Talas but symbols from elements of music like Kan, Meend, Gamak etc are also included in notation.



## INTEXT QUESTIONS 5.1

1. What is notation?
2. What can be shown through the medium of symbols in notation?

## 5.2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF NOTATION

In India, teaching in music has always been oral in the form of Guru-Shishya tradition. In this system of teaching music, the innumerable fine uses of notes and rhythm can only be taught fully by singing or playing orally. It is not possible to attempt to write them down. However, from Vedic period onwards musicologists have attempted to show the pitch and registers of notes which find mention in ancient literature.

In Vedic period, three types of notes, Udatta, Anudatta and Svarita, have been mentioned. Udatta denotes high, Anudatta denotes low and Svarita denotes medium, that is when there is a confluence of high and low. The symbols used to show them in written form were perpendicular line for Udatta (I), horizontal line for Anudatta (-) and no symbol for Svarita. Later, these notes of Vedic period were shown through numerals 1, 2 and 3 in place of lines. In various treatises of Vedic period, such a use is seen in different forms under different systems. With the increase in number of notes to seven, the music treatises showed the use of numerals 1,2,3,4,5,6,7 for these.

Thus, it is known that notes were shown in written form during the Vedic period for the purpose of learning and teaching. This can be considered as the originating source for systems of notation that were to be used later. Slowly, instead of lines and numerals, words like Shadja, Rishabh, Gandhar etc. or syllables like Sa, Re, Ga, Ma began to be used. For example, Bharat muni has used the terms Shadja, Rishabh etc. to show the notes or Svaras in his work 'Natyashastra', whereas Matang has used syllables Sa, Re,

Ga, Ma, Pa, Dha, Ni to show the Svaras in his work 'Brihaddeshi'. According to usage, he has shown the Svaras in two forms,

(1) Hrasva (short) (2) Deergh (long)

Hrasva - Sa Ri Ga Ma Pa Dha Ni

Deergh - Saa Re Gaa Maa Paa Dhaa Nee

The unit of time was called 'Kala', which also had two forms (1) Laghu (Small) (2) Guru (big)

Laghu Kala was indicated by Hrasva and Guru Kala was indicated by Deerghakshar.

In the 'Svargatadhyaya' of Sharngadev's 'Sangeet Ratnakar' written in thirteenth century, the seven Svaras have been shown in a manner similar to that of Matang. However, Svaras of Mandra and Tara registers or Saptaks are shown with a dot above the Svara (Ga) and standing or perpendicular line above the Svara (G'a) respectively. In Jati Prastaras, syllables have also been given under the Svaras.



### INTEXT QUESTIONS 5.2

1. What was the difference between the notation systems of Matang muni and Bharat muni?
2. What were the symbols used by Pt. Sharngadev to show the registers of Saptaks or Svaras?

### 5.3 PRESENTLY PREVALENT PT. VISHNU NARAYAN, BHATKHANDE NOTATION SYSTEM

In Modern era, the notation system created by Pt. Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande is the most prevalent. Being simple and easy to use, this notation system is used in most published books and academic institutions. Pt. V.N. Bhatkhande created a notation system and used it in books published by the name 'Hindustani Sangeet Paddhati, Kramik Pustak Malika (6 parts). It proved to be very convenient for the purpose of publishing.

The symbols used in this notation system are as follows:-

- |               |   |   |
|---------------|---|---|
| Shuddha Svara | - | no symbol only Sa Re Ga .....             |
| Komal Svara   | - | horizontal line underneath the Svara (Ga) |
| Tivra Svara   | - | Perpendicular line above Madhyam (Ma).    |
| Mandra Saptak | - | dot below Svaras Ma Pa Dha Ni.            |



Notes



## Notes

Madhya Saptak - no symbol, only Sa Re Ga.....

Tara Saptak - dot above Svaras Śa Ṛe Ġa Ṣa

Number of (-) symbol after a Svara indicates the number of Matras till which the Svara has to be continued singing.

Svaras within the symbol (—) should be sung in a single Matra.

Symbol used to show Meend – Pa Re.

The Matras of Talas are shown by the symbols given below.

Sam - ×

Khali - 0

Tali - 2,3,4 etc. shows the number of the Tali.

If a Svara is bracketed, e.g. (Pa), it means that first the Svara following the given Svara, then the Svara itself, then the Svara preceding it and then again the Svara itself is to be sung. That is, Dha Pa Ma Pa, these four Svaras are to be sung in a single Matra in the given example.



## INTEXT QUESTIONS 5.3

1. What does a dot above a Svara show?
2. Which symbol is used to show Meend?
3. What does a bracketed Svara mean?



## WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT

Notation was created so that the compositions of musical forms like Khayal, Dhrupad, Dhamar and Thumri etc. in note and rhythm could be conserved in written form. From Vedic to Modern period, different notation systems were developed from time to time using various lines, dots and several other symbols. Sometimes a perpendicular line or horizontal line was used, sometimes the numerals 1,2,3, or the Svaras were written in short or long form. However, in Modern period, the notation created by Pt. Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande is most prevalent because it is very simple and precise.



**TERMINAL EXERCISE**

1. What is notation?
2. What is the objective of notation?
3. What is the reason for a lack of continuity of notation in the history of Indian music?
4. What was the original form of notes in Vedic period?
5. What were the symbols to denote whether a Svara was high or low in Vedas?
6. What symbols has Matang used to denote whether a Svara was high or low?
7. What name has been given to the unit of time in treatises?
8. What symbols has Pt. V. N. Bhatkhande used for Tala?



**ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS**

**5.1**

1. The symbols, lines or numerals used to portray the written form of notes, registers and Tala in Music are called notation.
2. Pure, modified notes, different registers and Talas can be shown through the medium of various symbols in notation.

**5.2**

1. Bharat muni has used the terms Shadja, Rishabh etc. to show the notes of Svaras, whereas Matang muni has used syllables Sa, Re, Ga, Ma, Pa, Dha, Ni to show the Svaras. According to usage, he has shown the Svaras in the form of Hrasva (Short)

Hrasva - Sa Re Ga Ma pa Dha Ni

Deergh - Saa Re Gaa Maa Paa Dhaa Nee

2. Pt. Sharangadev has shown Mandra and Tara registers Saptaks by a dot above the Svara (Ga) and standing of perpendicular line above the Svara Ga respectively.




Notes



## Notes

## 5.3

1. a dot above a Svara shows that the Svara belongs to Tara Saptak.
2. To show Meend, the symbol used is - SaDha 
3. a bracketed Svara means that first the Svara following the given Svara, then the Svara itself, then the Svara preceding it and then again the Svara itself is to be sung. That is, four Svaras are to be sung in a single Matra. e.g. (Pa) means the four notes Dha Pa Ma Pa are to be sung or played.

## GLOSSARY

1. Imagination - ability of the mind to create images.
2. Lipi - script, which is the written form of any language.
3. Khayal - a musical form of slow and fast rhythm in EkTala, TeenTala, JhapTala etc. in which Alap, BolTana and Tana are included.
4. Dhrupad - a musical form in which upaj and rhythmic patterns are sung set to ChaarTala (ChauTala) etc.
5. Thumri - a musical form which employs 'Bol Banao' set to Deepchandi Talas, and 'Kaharwa' etc.
6. Treatise - a formal written work on a subject.
7. Prabandha - a musical form prevalent before thirteenth century comprising Dhatus and Angas.
8. Jati prastara - note elaboration used in singing Jatis.