

# SAMGITA-SASTRA AND SASTRIYA SAMGITA: THE 'SCIENCE OF MUSIC', 'SCIENTIFIC MUSIC' – THE INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

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## **Background**

Music theory, in India, is referred to as 'samgita sastra', the 'science of music'. Classical music, on the other hand, is called 'sastriya samgita' or 'music according to the science', i.e. music that follows the rules laid down in sastra, in the science - or theory - of music. So far so good, but problems arise as soon as we encounter other types of music not explicitly included in the category of 'scientific' (read: classical) music, but nevertheless based on the same 'science' (read: theory) as classical music. This is the case with many styles of devotional music, especially with the music of the Vaishnava temples and communities whose genres are in many cases regarded as the origin of that which is nowadays known and established as classical music.

## **Aims**

The present paper shall investigate the aspects of science and theory in Indian musicology. Concrete examples pertaining to the North Indian dhrupada tradition in both its classical and devotional branches shall serve to illustrate the argument. Further reference shall be made to the South Indian kirtana form as both part of the devotional repertoire and the classical tradition of Carnatic music.

## **Main contribution**

The main contribution of this paper is theoretical explication on the basis of Indian music theory as reflected in both musicological treatises and performance practice. Audio-recorded examples and/or sung demonstration of dhrupada compositions in both classical and devotional versions shall serve to demonstrate the practical implications of the theoretical facts.

## **Implications**

The concrete implications of music theory being perceived as a science (rather than a mere theory), and what consequences does this bear on the immediate execution of 'scientific music' will be examined. The question as to whether or not the common appropriation of the Indian 'sastriya sangita' and its English translation as 'classical music' is justified and tenable, too, will be of interest.