

## ***SPIRITUALITY AND SOCIAL AWAKENING THROUGH MUSIC IN INDIA***

M.G. Prasad, No. 1, Osborne Terrace, Maplewood, New Jersey 07040

### ***Introduction***

Music is a dynamic medium for an artistic expression of one's experiences. Music expresses emotions, knowledge, social and spiritual values, human behavior etc. It is said that a society is reflected through its music. In order to appreciate a speech the listener needs to understand it intellectually but to appreciate music the listener needs to experience the emotions of the musician. However, the lyric of the music conveys the theme. Music provides a connection to feelings of the listener. Music with themes of spirituality and social awakening will provide for both heart and head of the listeners. It is said that music has power of communication. In the words of poet H.W. Longfellow "Music is the universal language of humankind". This means that music easily reaches to diverse type of listeners. Music plays an important role in all societies. Music is also a driving force for dance. Music is formed through the sounds of nature. Musical compositions unite the experiences of composer and harmonious melody of the singer. Music can transform the listener. Music can take the listeners to different levels of moods and experiences. According to Hindu scriptures, the art and science of music has divine origin. In the words of yogi-seer Sriranga Sadguru, "Music should become the bridge that takes the listeners from sensual level to the spiritual level of Atman"

### ***Spirituality and Social Awakening through Music***

Every musical rendering has a theme that brings out the inner feelings and experiences of the composer. In India, the origin of classical music is traced into SamaVeda. Vedas are infinitely large collection of mantras heard by sages in their deep meditative states. These Veda mantras carry spiritual vibrations and convey knowledge about cosmos, universe and life. Then the classical music brings the emotions from the sublime experiences. The two forms of classical music are Hindustani and Carnatic. Then there are folk music, devotional music, festive music, etc.

This brief article deals with the musical compositions of saints of India. These compositions awakens the seekers to spirituality and also point out the social issues that confront the seekers. The saints such as Shankaraacharya, Ramanujaacharya and Madhvaacharya composed verses in simple Sanskrit to communicate spiritual and social values. In Bhaja Govindam, Shankaraacharya advises that "One should develop intelligence to relinquish greed and develop the ability to please one's mind with the earnings obtained through sincere and hard work". The shivasharanas such as Basavanna, Allamaprabhu and Akkamahadevi brought social awakening through simple verses as "Vachanas". Basavanna advises that purity has both internal and external aspects. Internal purity is in individual practice and external purity is with harmonious interaction with others. The saints of Maharashtra such as Jnanadev, Namadev, Tukaram and Janabai bring spiritual and social values through compositions as "Abhangs". Namadev addresses

the Lord as “Oh! Lord, people say you are the master and I am an orphan. You uplift everyone and I am downtrodden. So if you do not respond to my cry, it will be shameful to you”. The saints of north India such as Kabirdas, Ravidas, Tulasidas and Mirabai emphasize the consistent practice in remembering the glories of the Supreme Being. Kabirdas says “Remember the Supreme Being in any name. His abode is inside you and seek there to find Him”. Meerabai emphasizes that without spiritual love Lord will not bless and grace. In a composition Saint Chaitanya emphasizes humility and devotion for spiritual development. He says “one should sing the glories of the Supreme Being with humility as of a grass and forbearance as a tree”

Similarly, Alwars and Nayanamars have outpoured their spiritual experiences and social equanimity in their compositions in Tamil. In one verse Podatta Alwar says “Pray the Lord with devotion as the lamp in which love is the receptacle, ghee as the spiritual urge and spiritual joy as the wick”. One of nayanamars, Appar says “ God is in everyone as fire is in the wood and ghee is in the milk. One can see God by churning the mind with intelligence as the rope and spiritual love as the churning stick”. The Haridasas of Karnataka such as Purandara dasa, Kanaka dasa,