



## Music

## THE ROLE OF TABLA IN INDIAN MUSIC

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**ABSTRACT** Tabla is a most popular percussion instrument of India coming under membranophones category .Its versatility in all musical styles has enabled it to become most popular percussion instrument of India. It is used in almost all types of music like classical music, light classical music, light music, folk music, religious music, fusion music and western music. It consists of a pair of hand drums namely Tabla and Bayan comprising of contrasting sizes and Timbers. It has ten syllables which forms different types of rhythmic patterns. Its distinct sound and timber makes it as a main accompanying instrument of Indian music. It possesses a sophisticated tonal beauty which elevated the instrument to an unmatched status in the world of percussion.

**KEYWORDS :** Rhythm, percussion, syllables, Tradition, Music, Veda, Tal

Tabla is a most popular percussion instrument of North Indian music. It comes under membranophones category of percussion instrument. The instrument not only produces a wide range of sonorities pleasing to many tastes but also gives the performer a great scope to demonstrate his technical facility and speed. It is most developed tal keeping instrument of Indian music which is used in traditional, classical, semi classical and folk music of India. It is a pair of drums namely Tabla and Bayan.

The word Dayan literally means right which means right drum for a right handed person and left drum for left handed person. Normally right handed person plays Tabla in right hand so it is called as Dayan or Tabla and five syllables are played in Tabla they are **i) Ta or na ii) Te iii) TTe iv) Re v) Din** Bayan is played with left hand so it is called as Bayan or it is otherwise called as Duggi or Dugga and three syllables are played in Bayan They are :- **i) ka or kat ii) Ge iii) Ghe** and two syllables played with two drums (*yugma varna*) at a time They are :- **i) Dha ii) Dhin** So there is ten syllables in Tabla and these syllables form different types of rhythmic patterns bearing name as uthan ,peskar, kayada ,Rela,Gat,Tukuda, chakradar etc. The sound of tabla is treble and Bayan is Bass.

The reason behind the treble sound of Tabla is due to its cylindrical shape in which its diameter is generally is about 4inch to 6inch and height is about 10 inch and it is made up of wood like shisam, Neem, mehanguni etc. and is hollowed out from the top in shape of circle remaining sealed at the Bottom .The hollowed circle part is covered with goat skin .The size of the bottom of tabla is more wider than the upper face which is covered with goat skin. The important scientific aspects of Tabla is, if the upper face of Tabla is more in diameter it sounds in lower pitch and less in diameter resulting to higher in pitch. The Bass sound of Bayan is due to its shape and big in size. When the Bass sound of Bayan comes with treble sound of Tabla then a mesmeric sweetness evolve and the audience feel full of Joy.

The Tabla is made of hollowed out wood and that hollow was done according to the diameter of the tabla, More the diameter more hollow was made and less diameter less hollow was made. Likewise In case of Bayan the hollow was usually spherical in shape inside and according to the depth of Bayan the diameter of Bayan is determined. Its diameter is usually 9inch to 10 inch and height is 10inch to 11 inch .Bayan is generally made of clay or brass. In case of Brass Bayan it was coated with Nickel and chromium which looks attractive. The Tabla and Bayan is tightened with lace made up of cow or camel skin and small wooden block which is called as "gott" is used in Tabla to tighten the tension of membrane. The block was hammered down with the help of tabla hammer for heightening the scale of Tabla and hammered up to lower down the scale and fine tune is made by hammering the Gajra (The ring shape surrounded around tabla face) up and down. The Tabla is generally tuned in higher octave (tarsapatka sa) and Bayan in lower octave ( Mandra sa).The most striking features of tabla is its round black spot which is called syahai or Gab made up of iron powder mix with rice paste or any other sticky materials used and applied on the middle place of tabla membrane and a very plane stone was rubbed over it, the process is called as juari (The final touch of tabla repairing) its thickness is depends upon in which scale the Tabla is made for

playing and many times the thickness is depending upon the diameter of Tabla .

Tabla is the main accompanying instrument of Hindustani music. It has been used in classical, semi classical, light, folk, Bhajan etc. and also in fusion music. Needless to say that Tabla has a great timber richness for which it is used to accompany vocal, instrumental and Dance music. Tabla is also an important solo instrument with an extensive repertoire all its own. The playing techniques of Tabla is very scientific. It needs a systematic practice of fingers and palms to create different rhythmic patterns, different compositions and good tonal quality. Vedic tradition is seen in the method of learning of Tabla i.e. Guru sisya Parampara (Teacher student tradition). One cannot able to learn Tabla from books .It can be learnt only from a guru (Teacher).The strong bond between teacher and disciple is considered essential for continuation of the musical tradition. Indeed the tradition of teacher and disciple is considered to be at the very core of Indian classical music. To acquire these qualities a Tabla player needs a good learned master or Guru. A good master can guide his or her disciple of playing tabla in right way .After learning these lessons it is up to the disciple to do practice properly. He must remember his mistake which was pointed out by his guru and practice again and again until the mistakes eradicated from him.

Indian music is one of the oldest musical tradition of the world. It has its root in Veda. The chanting of Veda is the first rhythmic experience of Indian music. The hymns of Sam Veda an ancient religious text sung as samagana and not chanted. The mechanics of the music have undergone a great change from Vedic period to modern period but the essential aspects of music like awe, respect and devotions have not changed. In India there is two types of classical music

- i) Hindusthani music (Northern Indian music)
- ii) Carnatic music (South Indian music)

Tabla is played as main percussion instrument in Hindusthani music. The Hindusthani system has two major concept that is Rag and Tal. Rag is melodic and Tal is Rhythmic which is a modal aspect of music .Both Rag and Tal plays pivotal role in Indian music. In Tabla both Raga and Tala can be played. When number of Tabla tuned to different notes or swara of a Raga and it is played in a rhythmic cycle, that is called Tabla Tarang .But the important use of tabla is to provide rhythmic cycle to a musical composition or Bandish of particular Raga in shape of Tekha which is a standard series of bols that form the rhythmic basis of tabla accompaniment for a given tala.

The word "Tal" literally means clap .Tal is the important medium in which the time used in music is measured. The clapping of hands is the oldest form of accompaniment .Today the system of clap and wave is done to saw sam( 1<sup>st</sup> matra of a tala) and phank(It comes generally in the middle of a tal ) in a particular tal which enables vocalist , instrumentalist and Dancers to recognize the time cycle during their performances . Tal get its shape through tekha .It is further segregated to matra, which is fundamental unit of a Tal, It is called as beats in western music. One syllable is generally used as one matra in tekha. In some exceptional cases there is two to four syllables is used in one matra in some tekha like Ektal , Adachoutal ,Dhamar, Jhumra etc. so

too many syllables strung together to have the value of one matra. A group of matra comprising two to five matra in a division is called Bibhag . This Bibhag was described as claps and waves. When first matra of a Bibhag is signified by clap of hands then it is called as Bhari and when it is signified by waves then it is called as Khali. In this way when any tal was rendered orally by starting from first matra to last matra by showing claps and waves and coming to first matra, this process is called abartan or cycle. The importance of cycle gives special significance to first beat which is called sum. It is the most important place for tabla player and other musician. In this place musician and tabla player after doing different types of permutation and combination they meet in sam and audience feels full of joy and ecstasy.

So this reveals that tabla is a great percussion instrument bearing the qualities to perform as soloist and accompanist.