



**ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER**

**Arts**

**UNIQUENESS OF SITAR AS A MUSICAL INSTRUMENT**

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**ABSTRACT**

Accordingly, there has been an enthusiasm among many to know about the inventors and the developers of this musical instrument. There have been various opinions about the invention of Sitar and its modifiers, there are several legends about Sitar but only few evident available. It is a matter of concern that years after the demise of some legendary persons, some of their followers have made such imaginary folklores of those legendary persons which become myth in course of time. Later some in-experienced writers and musicians who are unaware of historical facts frame some imaginary stories about those legendary persons which are still believed by many. Most of the scholars have opined that Sitar was developed and during the period of 18th century and have acknowledged that, the family successors of Tansen actually playing Sitar and developed its form further.

As per the blessings of God, humans have always been enthusiastic about the origin of objects. It is a human tendency to know that who has made it and why and how has it been made. This enthusiasm has led the man to do new discoveries and invention. A discovery or an invention can be in any field. Let us talk about the field of music. There have been several talented musicians in the world of music who have been successful in their new findings and discoveries. Let us talk about the musical instrument 'Sitar' which is a popular musical instrument and is also known as a complete musical instrument. In course of time the importance and popularity of Sitar has become widespread.

Most of the writers who have written about the evolution of Sitar have mentioned that it was originated from the ancient musical instrument called Veena. Some research scholars have opined that it is a foreign musical instrument which was prevalent earlier in Persia. In Persian language 'Seh' means three and 'Taar' means a string. That means it is a three stringed musical instrument. In Sanskrit language it has a different meaning. Most of the researchers have mentioned about the link between Sitar and Hazrat Amir Khusro, which is quite surprising for many. Research scholars like Sri Umesh Joshi and some others have opined that in Eastern India 'Sehtar' or Sitar musical instrument was prevalent before the lifetime of Hazrat Amir Khusro. Some music scholars like, Sri Acharya Brihaspati, Sri Sudarshan Acharya Shastri, Sri Hammid Hussain, Sri Rama Ballav Mishra, Dargah Kuli Khan etc have opined that Nemat Khan (Sadaramg) was a royal singer who sang in the Darbar of King Mohammad Shah rangiley, Nemat Khan's brother Khusro Khan actually invented Sitar and also modified Sitar. Later his family successors and disciples of music made Sitar more popular. Sri S.Krishnaswamy and some other Scholars have opined that Sitar is not actually an Indian Musical Instrument but is a modified Persian musical instrument Sehtar. Some other musical scholars have opined that Hazrat Amir Khusro modified the Iranian Musical instrument Sehtar and developed its new form which was called Sitar. Sri Krishna Swamy, a researcher has opined that the word 'Sitar' has originated from the Persian 'Sehtar' musical instrument, but it is believed that the musical instrument had evolved in between the ending period of Middle-Age and the beginning of modern times. Sri Krishna Swamy in his descriptions about Sitar has mentioned lastly about various names of Veena like- 'Tirtantri', 'Tirnari', 'Tirpari', 'Tirshiv' and 'Tirtari'. The word 'Sehtar' mentioned by Shri Krishna Swamy indicates that during the period of Middle-Age the Indian musical instruments were also called by Persian names. One of such example is- A book titled as 'Khusro-wo-Pisar' written in 'Pabalwi' language mentions about the 'Indian been' (musical instrument) was called as 'Udey Hind', the musical instrument 'Santoor' was called 'Kanar' and the 'Tanpura' was

called 'Tambur Buzurg'. Similarly Al. Masoodee; a foreign tourist had written a book titled as 'Garooj-Ul-Zahab' in which he has mentioned about several stringed musical instruments, in this book he has named the Indian musical instrument 'Been' as 'Dara-Been'.

Al-Masoodee had travelled to various countries like Turkey, Sham, Multan, France, Kisman, Iran, Srilanka, Sindh and India and described about various stringed musical instruments, which were prevalent in Yunan, Sindh, France, India and Iran etc.. Besides explaining about stringed musical instruments, Al Masoodee have also mentioned about the use of 'Mizrab' for playing some of these musical instruments.

The stringed musical instruments which were played by using the device called 'Mizrab' are found mentioned in some music books written in Persian language and Iranian language. It is further mentioned that those musical instruments had the specific cords or string called 'Dasa-Teen', for example a book titled as 'Kitab-Ul-Shaf' mentions about some musical instruments played with the device called 'Mizrab' and there are different number of stings attached with these instruments. In some, there are two strings and in other there are four strings 'Char Taar' etc. Al-Farabi a famous Iranian writer has also mentioned about stringed musical instrument called 'Tambur' whose strings are called 'Dasa-teen'. From the above mentioned description it may be concluded that the stringed musical instrument prevalent in the countries like-Iran, Persia, Multan and India were made with varying number of strings such as one, three, seven and attached with 'Sareeka' device. Veena musical instrument attached with 'Sareeka' device which is also called 'Tritantri-Veena' was first obtained from Ramamatya's 'Swaramela Kala Nidhi' organization. So it was clear that before the period of 15th century 'Tritantri-Veena' musical instruments were found only in India. So it would be wrong to assume that some Indian musician had developed Sitar on the basis of Persian Sehtar. As per the historical evidence, it can be assumed that the Iranians were first people who have explained in details about their traditional musical instruments.

Then the question arises that why the Indian Sitar musical instrument is called as the developed form of Persian 'Sehtar' musical instrument. To find it's answer one need to read the book named as 'KanzulTuhaf'.

Various historians have formed varied opinions regarding the author of this book. It is believed that this book was written 53 years after the death of Hazrat Amir Khusro.

Hazrat Amir Khusro in his book 'AizajeKhusrawi' had mentioned about 26 musical instruments prevalent in those days. The names of those musical instruments are as such-

'Damama', 'Chang', 'Azbarod', 'Kanoon', 'Janaan', 'Dhol', 'Chehra', 'Baaz', 'Daf', 'Naya', 'Masak-Kasak', 'DastanayaDastak', 'Tamboor', 'Dastan', 'Babak', 'Shehnaayee', 'Babgag', 'Dam', 'Sarfi', 'Dholgazi', 'Dholak', 'Gazi', 'Rabab', 'Ood', 'Nawalak', 'Kagaar', 'Tariba-A-Hind' etc. Foreign stringed musical instrument like 'Sehtar' is also found mentioned in this book. Sri Rashid Malik has opined that the 'Sehtar' mentioned in the book, 'KnazulTuhaf' is the same 'Sehtar' musical instrument which is said to have invented by Hazrat Amir Khusro. Mr. Rashid further says that Mizrab was used for playing the stringed musical instrument 'Sehtar'. He further says that this musical instrument further was found prevalent beyond the borders of Iran, in the country like India, Turkey and China etc. this musical instrument was called 'Sitar'. SaikhHyder, a musician used four strings in 'Sehtar' and Ziauddin Shiraji, another musician experimented two more string in this musical instrument.

From these above mentioned descriptions it is assumed that 'Sehtar' was prevalent in Iranian and Persian civilization. It is also assumed that 'Mizrab' was used to play this form of stringed musical instrument. But it is not yet proved that the Indian Sitar has evolved from the Persian Sehtar.

The picture of 'Iranian sehtar' musical instrument is found in page no.341 of the book 'KhusroShanashi' published by Tarakki Urdu Board, Delhi. In that page of the book the musical instrument 'Sehtar' is also mentioned as 'Satee' and is described as a most ancient musical instrument, prevalent since ancient times. The bowl 'Tumba' of this 'Sehtar' is strong and three strings or wires are tied along the instrument, every string produces different sounds. In India, various number of strings were used in the 'Veena' musical instruments, prevalent before the period of Middle Age. For example a Veena having one string was called 'Ek Taar Tantri'. 'Do Taar Tantri' was named as 'Nakuli' and the Veena with three strings was called 'Tritantri' etc. there was one 'Kinnari' Veena which had three strings. In Indian music, since Vedic Era till date there has been a continuing tradition of stringed musical instruments. Hence if some names of the musical instruments have similarity then it cannot be assumed that 'Sitar' is a foreign musical instrument.

If we consider the shapes of this musical instrument then we find that the 'Sitar' found in India are quite different from the Persian ones. Hence from the evidence and descriptions found in various music books regarding the stringed musical instruments, it can be assumed that the 'Sitar' musical instrument is not at all a modified form of any foreign stringed musical instrument. It is well known that Hazrat Amir-Khusro was a prominent Persian poet as well as a famous statesman who believed in Sufism ideology. Many Indian scholars have appreciated him for his contributions towards music. But after his death some of his followers unnecessarily made controversial remarks against him were baseless. Veena which was called 'Tritantri Veena' till the period of Sharang Dev was later developed and called 'Sitar'. He has also opined that 'Tanpura' and 'Sitar' were the developed forms of Tritantri-Veena. He has further mentioned that between the period of 7<sup>th</sup> century to 13<sup>th</sup> century 'Kinnari -Veena' (with 'Sarika') was more prevalent. According to him the 'Sitar' dates back to about 200 years. Even today in some western countries this type of three stringed musical instruments are found through the word meaning of the Persian Sitar. Sanskrit Tritantri is same but its way of performance vary. Some Sanskrit book writers have mentioned the names of 'Veena' musical instrument and as per them 'Tritantri' is also one 'Veena' and on this basis the name of 'Sitar' is 'Tritantri-Veena'.

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