

The Influence of Harps on Veena engravings in Pitalkora Buddhist Cave Temple

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ඉන්දියාවේ මහාරාෂ්ට්‍ර ප්‍රාන්තයේ අවුරන්ගාබාද් දිස්ත්‍රික්කයේ පිහිටා ඇති පිටල්කොරා බෞද්ධ ගුහාශ්‍රිත විණා කැටයම්වල සුවිශේෂී ලක්ෂණ පිළිබඳ අධ්‍යයනය කිරීම මෙම පර්යේෂණයේ ප්‍රමුඛාධ්‍යානය යි. විවිධ වර්ගයේ විණා ආකෘති භාරතීය කලා නිර්මාණ, ගෘහ නිර්මාණ සහ සාහිත්‍යයක ප්‍රචණ්ඩයන් තුළ දැකගන්නා වන අතර හින්දු සේ ම බෞද්ධාගමික සංකල්ප විෂයයෙහි ද විණාව සංකේතාත්මක තත්ත්ව වාද්‍යයක් ලෙස සුවිශේෂ වේ. කෙසේ වෙතත් පිටල්කොරා බෞද්ධ ගුහාවන්හි ප්‍රතීයමාන වන විණා කැටයම් ත්‍රිත්වය පිළිබඳ නිරීක්ෂණය කිරීමේ දී ඒවා ආකෘතියෙන් මෙසපොටේමියානු, ඊජිප්තු, පර්සියානු හා(ර්)ප් (Harp) නමැති තත්ත්ව වාද්‍යයේ හැඩයට සමාන බව ප්‍රත්‍යක්ෂ වේ. එමෙන් ම පිටල්කොරා විණා විශේෂය හින්දු විෂයයක අන්වේෂණයන්හි දැක්වෙන විණා ආකෘතියට වඩා වෙනස් ය. එම විණා බෞද්ධ සංකල්ප හා බැඳුණු ඊට අනන්‍ය ලක්ෂණ විදහාපාන අතර ඒවායෙහි හැඩය පෙර කී හා(ර්)ප් නමැති තත්ත්ව වාද්‍යයේ හැඩයට සමාන බව සාහිත්‍යයක හා පුරාවිද්‍යාත්මක තොරතුරු අනුව සාධනය කළ හැකි ය.

ප්‍රමුඛ පද: විණා, බෞද්ධ ගුහා විහාර, හින්දු සහ බෞද්ධ සංකල්ප, හා(ර්)ප්, පුරාවිද්‍යාත්මක තොරතුරු.

The Buddhist caves of *Pitalkora* carved in the Satmala range on the northern fringe of Aurangabad District of Maharashtra lie 50 miles to the south-west of the Ajanta caves and 23 miles to the north-west of Ellora. These rock-cut caves date back from the 2nd Century BCE to 1st Century CE.¹ The seven strings *Veena*

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සංස්. මහාචාර්ය පැට්ටික් රත්නායක, ආචාර්ය කේ. ඩී. ජයවර්ධන, ජ්‍යෙෂ්ඨ කථිකාචාර්ය දිනලී ප්‍රනාන්දු

මානවශාස්ත්‍ර පීඨ ශාස්ත්‍රීය සංග්‍රහය, 23 කලාපය, 2014/2015

මානවශාස්ත්‍ර පීඨය, කැලණිය විශ්වවිද්‍යාලය

(*Sapatatantri Veena*) together with their plectrums have been found among some sculptures in Cave No. 4. The particular sculptures are three in number: whereas two sculptures contain the representations of males (Fig. 1 & 2) the other one represents a female along with a male partner (Fig. 3). The figure shown in the Fig. 1 is holding a *Veena* against his left shoulder whereas the male shown in the Fig. 2 holds his *Veena* in between right and left hands while plucking the strings with his left hand. Particularly, in this figure the male figure holding the plectrum with his left hand is significant. He is also ornamented with bracelets in his left hand and a double robed garland around the neck. The female figure represented in the sculpture shown in Fig. 3 is playing a *Veena* having seven strings with her right hand. The *Veena* is placed on her lap and holds the plectrum (*Kona*) with her thumb and forefinger of the same hand, and is seen plucking the second string. The *Veena* represented in Pitalkora stone engravings, contains three *Veena* with seven strings similar to a bow or harp which is different from the *Veena* depicted at other locations and closely resembles to the shape of harp found from Mesopotamia, Egypt, Persia, Greece and Rome. Also the seven strings *Veena* in Pitalkora does not appear to have been influenced by the *Veena* in Hindu practices. This confirms that the *Veena* of Pitalkora has its own concept conjoined with Buddhism and the shape of the harp seems to have been influenced from Mesopotamia, Egypt, Persia, Greece and Rome, and provides a preamble for the present study.

The present study intends to address the research question; ‘Does the seven strings *Veena* display in Pitalkora Buddhist caves temple resemble the shape of the harp found from ancient Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Persian, Greece or Rome or have been influenced from that of Hindu practices?’

The present study aims to examine:

- The characteristics of Pitalkora Veena with those depicted at other locations.
- Whether the seven strings *Veena* in Pitalkora engraves display different and distinct characteristics from that of Hindu practices.
- Whether the *Veena* in Pitalkora displays any combination with the concept of Buddhism.
- Any similarities between the shape of Veena in Pitalkora with harps of Mesopotamia, Egypt, Persia, Greece and Rome.

The earliest account of these caves are found in an account made by Swami Prajnanananda. According to him, the caves were first found by John Wilson in 1853 and described as *chaitya halls or viharas*.² Fergusson and Burgess also made a more detailed account about the Pitalkora engraving, in their monumental work “Cave Temple of India” yet no attention was paid on the particular subject. The ‘report of the Buddhist cave-temples and their inscriptions’ Burgess has given his particular attention to the Pitalkora caves.³ However, the first mention about Pitalkora engraves and the *Veena* is found in “Bombay Historical Society” (1941) by M.G. Dikshit in his book “Bombay Historical Society” (1941). He discovered three portraits of the seven stringed *Veena* that were engraved on stone slabs, excavated from the debris in the forecourt of the Cave No. 4 of Pitalkora. He reveals that the development of the rock-cut architecture of Pitalkora might have started in the 2nd century B.C. The seven strings *Veena* in Buddhist literature coincides with Bharata’s Chitra veena, presented by Dr. Thakur Jaidev Singh.⁴ However he does not present more details to prove his idea neither does he discuss the shape of the *Veena*. Swami Prajnanananda in his ‘A History of Indian Music (1963), and ‘A Historical study of Indian Music’ (1981) deals in detail about the Pitalkora *Veena* engraves.

However, he has not paid attention to the shape of the *Veena* as well as the resemblance of the concept of *Veena* in the Buddhist literature and in Buddhism.

This study employed a survey of literature and examination of archaeological information. The literature survey included library surveys, map studies, Tripitaka, Jathaka and scholarly studies. The archaeological examination was performed to seek any structural evidence to identify and analyze if the shape of seven stringed *Veena* engraved in Pitalkora has been influenced by ancient Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Persian harps.

The *Veena* featured in sculptures of Bharut (2nd century BCE), Terracota: Ruper Sunga (200 BCE), Ajanta (2nd century CE), Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka (2nd – 3rd century CE), Amaravati (2nd century CE), Nagarjunakunda (2nd century CE), the *Veena* embossed on the coins of the Emperor Samudragupta II (4th Century CE), Cambodia (6th Century CE), Barabudur (8th Century CE), etc. ar bow or harp-shaped. A different shape can be seen in Gandhara which is perpendicular in shape with a belly, similar to modern Indian Sarod (1st – 2nd Century CE). Again the *Veena* perpendicular in shape with gourds are found in sculpture of Mahavallipuram (7th Century CE), Bengal (Ranpur, 9th Century CE) and Bagali Kalesvara (14th Century CE). The particular *Veena* is known as *Saraswathi Veena* in Hindu practices and it also shows some similarity to the later South Indian *Veena*. This type of *Veena* is also seen in the hands of god Saraswathi.

The evolution of Hindu *Veena* has no connection with the bow or harp shaped *Veena* which has been found from Pitalkora caves. Rig-Veda mentions of a particular *Veena*, named vaana (vaana < venu < veena) with hundred strings: “*marutah vanam sata-sankhyabhis-tantribhir-yuktam veena-visesam*

dhamanto vadayantri vadayanti.” The authors like Narada of Naradi Siksha (1st Century CE), Bharata (2nd Century CE), Matanga (5th – 7th Centuries CE), Parasavadeva (9th – 11th Century CE), and Sarangadeva (13th Century CE) and post-Sarangadeva writers on music have described different types of *Veena* in their treatises. Such descriptions do not provide any resemblance to the harp – shaped seven stringed *Veena*. A seven stringed *Veena* (Saptatantri *Veena*) describes by Bharata in the Natyasastra: *saptatantri bhavectra vipanci navatanrika/Vipanci konavadya syat citra cangulivadana//*” (The Citra-Veena with seven strings, used to be played by finger. Vipanci-veena, having nine strings played by plectrum (kona), the bow or harp-shaped seven strings veena found from Pitalkora, used to play by plectrum (kona). The chitra veena with seven strings in Natyasastra, used to play by finger, although Bharata does not refer to the shape of these veenas). Narada in his Naradha sikha has mentioned about the Veenas, Daravi and Gatra (*Daravi gatra-veena ca dve veene gana jatisu / samika gatra-veena tu tasyah srnuta laksanam / Gatra veena tu sa prokta yasyam gyanti samagh//*).

He said that the dravi veena was used as an accompaniment to jati raga and the gatra veena was accompanied to the same gana. Narada also did not give details about the characteristic significance about his veena description.

The Indian Tamil literature (Sangam literature – 200 BC) refers to various musical instruments as such Seerkazhi, and Yaaz. The Yaaz or Yaal, is a stringed instrument of the Veena type. Additionally, *Silappatikaram* mentions four types of Yaaz. The Yaaz was an open-stringed Veena with a wooden boat-shaped skin-covered resonator and an ebony stem. However it is not related to the Pitalkora Veena. Besides the seven stringed Veena engraved in Pitalkora has also been found one fragmentary

Sculpture of a wing Kinnara and one of flying Gandharva. During the Vedic period, the Gandharva and Kinnara used to be considered enemies of the gods.⁵ According to the above evidence, and the literary descriptions, it is apparent that the sculptures of the Buddhist caves of Pitalkora have not been inspired by the conceptions of the Vedic period.

In addition to the evidence of *Veena* found from Pitalkora, the bow shaped Veena can also be found from Bharuth, Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda in India, Burma, and from the Brazen Palace (Lovamahapaya) in Anuradhapura-Sri Lanka etc. Significantly all such places are connected with Buddhism.

According to the Buddhist literature, the seven stringed Veena also features in different birth stories of Buddha, called Jataka that were assumed by compiled between the 3rd – 2nd Centuries BCE. The Jataka stories such as Guttula, Matsya, Bherivada, Vidura Pandita etc, mention the Veena in different contexts. The Guttula Jataka in particular contain references to the veena having seven strings:

Saptatantri sumadhura mohini veenar / vadana sikhila antevasika amara//

In the Tripitaka, we found *Sona Sutta* (AN 6.55) and *Sakka Panha Sutta* (DN 21) also have mentioned the Veena. The other narrative is contained in the *Sakka Panha sutta* of the *Deega nikaya* of the Sutta pitaka of the Tripitaka.

The Mesopotamian harps (before 3500 BCE) were two kinds were called ‘*Sabbeka*’ (Lower – chested concord harp) and *Psantrina Sunifouyah* (upper – chested concord harp). They were played with the help of plectrum (pick). The standard of Ur is a Sumerian artifact excavated and found in a royal tomb in Ur which displays a harp player. The panel of depictions of Ur is now on display in the British museum in London.

The *Veena* of ancient Egypt (4000 BEC) was bow-shaped. Egyptians introduced this type of harp as “*Buni*”. It also used a plectrum in order to play the *Buni*. A bow-harp was found in the tomb of Kaem-Nofer in Egypt, having seven strings. The harp of Persia (2500 BEC) was known as ‘*Chang*’. The bow-shaped harp was found from the sculptures in Persia. However, the Greek (harp) is similar in appearance to a small harp but with distinct differences from the bow-shaped. The lyre was played with a plectrum (pick).

The above facts and evidence so far found and analyzed testifies to the fact that the seven stringed *Veena* represented in Pitalkora stone engraving is similar to a bow or harp, and closely resembles the shape of harp found from Egypt and Persian. The shape also seems to have been influenced by ancient Mesopotamian, Greeks harps. Conversely, there is no similar appearance in the *Veena* depicted in Hindu religious customs and practices. Neither do they portray the characteristics and elements depicted in the *Veena* engraved in the cave temple at Pitalkora. Therefore, it is apparent that the particular *Veena* in the caves of Pitalkora has its own characteristics depicting the Buddhist customs and practices which might have been influenced from Mesopotamian or Sumerian harp as a result of long established relationship with India.

End Notes:

- 1 Vide Archaeological survey, West India – IV, 1883, London, pp. 11, 12
- 2 Prajnanananda, (1981), A Historical Study of Indian Music, pp. 107-116.
- 3 Vide archaeology Survey, West India, (1883), pp. 11-12
- 4 Prajnanananda, Swami (1960) Historical Development of Indian Music, pp. 374
- 5 A Historical Study of Indian Music, Swami Prajnanananda, (1960), pp. 107-108.

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Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3

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සූජ්‍ය බලදොර ඉන්ද්‍රජෝති හිමි

The word *Chandas* is to be represented vital part in both Vedic and Classical Sanskrit Literature. From the time of uncertain history, in Indian tradition, it is believed that knowledge has been passed down by memorizing the mantras from generation to generation orally. Something in lyrical form is easier of memorizing. For this sole reason, most of Sanskrit scriptures are written in verse form. *Chandas* is a vidyā so that we can say, it is the science of metre. *Chandas* being the science of rhythm became a very important part in ancient education system as well. Here described the origin of chandas, its definition and development, a brief idea of Vedic and Classical metres, their types and the elements of Chandas. Further it is discussed how the Chandas plays an important role in Vedic and Classical literature. The reference of considering *Chandas* as one of the *vedāngas* is discussed here. An account of the origin and development of Chandasśāstra has also been accommodated here. A note of the varieties of Vedic and Classical metres are added here. End of this paper a brief sketch of some elements of prosody viz., *gana*, *yati*, *devatā*, *varna* and *gotra*, *bhūta sankyā* are also included.

ජන්දසින් තොර වූ ශබ්දයක් හෝ ශබ්දයකින් තොර ජන්දසක් හෝ නොමැති බව හරතමුනිවරයා නිගමනය කරයි.¹ ජන්දස හා ශබ්දය අතර සබඳතාව කොපමණදැයි එයින් ගම්‍ය වේ. ජන්දසේ අපේක්ෂිතාර්ථය රිද්මයයි. ශබ්දයට රිද්මය ලැබෙන්නේ ජන්දස මගිනි. ශබ්දය හා රිද්මය සුසංයෝග කිරීම මානව ඉතිහාසයේ මුල් යුගයේ පටන් පවතින්නට ඇතැයි විශ්වාස කළ හැකි ය. පරිසරයේ සෑම

© සූජ්‍ය බලදොර ඉන්ද්‍රජෝති හිමි

සංස්. මහාචාර්ය පැවිලි රත්නායක, ආචාර්ය කේ. ඩී. ජයවර්ධන, ජ්‍යෙෂ්ඨ කවිකාචාර්ය දිනලී ප්‍රනාන්දු

මානවශාස්ත්‍ර පීඨ ශාස්ත්‍රීය සංග්‍රහය, 23 කලාපය, 2014/2015

මානවශාස්ත්‍ර පීඨය, කැලණිය විශ්වවිද්‍යාලය