

Vina (With Special Reference to Temples of Khajuraho)

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ABSTRACT

Epigraphical sources have great contribution in the reconstruction of history of Indian music. Khajuraho temples are famous for their erotic art. These temples also contain tremendous and marvelous sculptures of musical instruments. In this research paper, I would like to discuss the figures of musical instrument vina depicted on the walls of temples in context to other vina instruments in India. Stringed instruments in ancient times whether bowed, plucked or struck varieties, were commonly known as vina. The word vina seems to have been first used in the Vedas. Only later on the word vina came to be used to denote the fretted instrument. The modern vina before attaining its present form underwent a long process of development giving birth to different types of stringed instruments.

Keywords : Khajuraho Temple, Epigraphical Sources, Vyalamukha, Khajuraho Sculptures, Amuktamalyada

I. INTRODUCTION

The origin of vina and its varieties is still doubtful as no records are available which can furnish a detailed account of its evolution and other particulars, such as the name of its originator and also the time of its evolution. Still it has been acknowledged almost by all musicologists of all the ages that the vina was one of the oldest musical instruments of the past and also in great use even in Vedic age for the fulfillment of the chants of hymns of the veda. It is very difficult to ascertain how and when Brahma vina or Saraswati vina, Rudra vina, Katyayan vina or kachchhapi vina, the reference of which is found in Sanskrit works on music, came into existence.

The various ancient sculptures of Saraswati, the goddess of learning, are depicted seated on a white lotus with vina in her hands. Such sculptures, frescoes and paintings of the medieval age inspire all lovers of music to believe firmly that the origin of vina and its varieties, the foremost tata-vadya of this country, has

its origin from her. Hence the vina similar to that of Saraswati is very popular among all musical instruments in India known as Saraswati vina.

Two distinct types of vinas are available throughout India. The northern vina is known as the Saraswati vina, which is very simple in its appearance and it is made of two gourds of same size and a bamboo piece. Rudra vina is a very popular and most common instrument of South. Jack and black wood are only used for its construction. The vinas of south are elaborately ornamented by ivory carvings. It is very costly and beyond the means of ordinary lovers of music to have one with limited resources.

Vina is generally held either in a horizontal position across the player's knee or else slanting against the shoulder putting one end on the right thigh. It is played with the help of nails of the fore and middle fingers of the right hand or with a plectrum known as mezaraba which produces sound. The fore, middle and sometimes the ring fingers of the left hand also

produce musical notes of different pitch; other mechanisms such as bridges, known as *purva* and *uttara meru*, are fixed on both the ends of both the types of *vinas*. Strings are fixed with the tail piece at one end and the other with the pegs. Frets are all equal in number and similar to each other except the decoration and workmanship of the *vina* of the South. Three types of *vina* are noticed in the sculptures of *vijayanagara* temples: *Vina* with two circular boards of gourds, *Vina* with one Gourd and the *Tuila* type.ⁱ In the first category the *vina* has two circular gourds connected with a resonator. This type of *vina* corresponds to *kinnera* type of *veena* mentioned in contemporary literature. It was a great favourite *vina* during the middle ages, though now it has vanished from classical music.ⁱⁱ The second, *i.e.* *vina* with only one gourd belonged to *tamboori* group. This type of instruments is identified with the *dandi* referred to in the *Amuktamalyada*.ⁱⁱⁱ The third type is *tuila* type of *vina*. This type of *vina* is popular in *Orissa*. The *tuila* is peculiar because only three fingers are used without moving them up or down.

In *Bharata's* time the *Chitra* was along the *vipanchi* *vina*, one of the major instruments. We do not get any details of its construction, but this much is known that it was played with the fingers.

The temples of *Khajuraho* were built in 10th century AD. In walls of *Khajuraho* temples various musical instruments are depicted. *Veena* depicted in temples of *Khajuraho* appears to be *ektantri*. It has one gourd at upper end while the lower end is sometimes decorated with *Vyalamukh*. Of the stringed-instruments, the *vina* figures most prominently in *Khajuraho* sculptures. It has been depicted in the hands of goddess *Saraswati*, *Apasaras* and *Vidyadharas* and also as an accompaniment to the *Dance*. It provided a good background music to a singer and could be played even solo. The *vina* was played both by men and women. *Khajuraho* *vinas* have generally single and rarely double gourds, the upper one being

smaller. Usually both the gourds are round but in some cases the lower one is cubical. Those with the double gourds resemble the so called *Saraswati -vinas* of South India. The stem of the instrument was sometimes decorated with a beaded pattern. In a few more artistic specimens the lower end of the stem is shaped like a *Vyalamukha*^{iv}. It is difficult to say anything about the system of frets, the number and nature of strings and adjusting pegs, etc. on the basis of the sculptural delineations of the *vina*. While playing the instrument generally it is shown slanting on the left shoulder. We could not find any example in which the instrument is held horizontally across the knees of the player. In *Khjauraho* sculptures, except the *vina*, no other instrument of the class of stringed instruments could be noticed, other than one figure of *tambura* held by *kirat* in one of the pillars at *antarala* in *Dulhaddev* temple. The same is the case with the sculptures decorating the *Bhubanesvara* temples. This may show that *vina* was the only popular stringed-instrument in use at *Khajuraho* during the age of the *Chandellas*. Some figures of *vina* in temples of *Khajuraho* are depicted in following pictures.

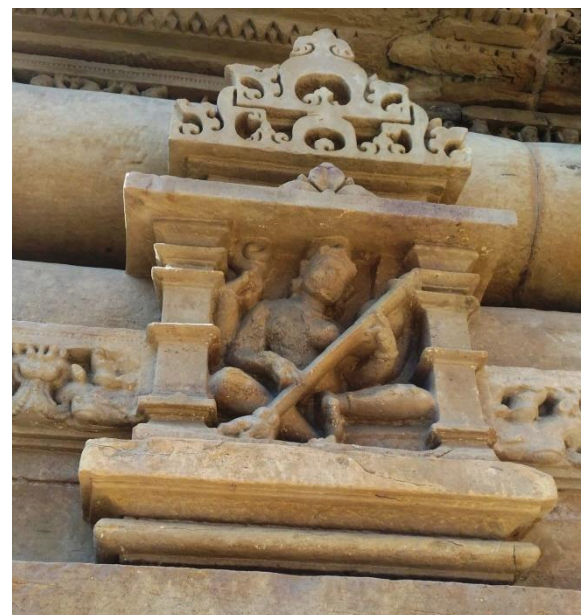


Figure 1. Lakshman temple (outer north facing wall)



Figure 2. Kandariya temple (outer circumambulatory path)

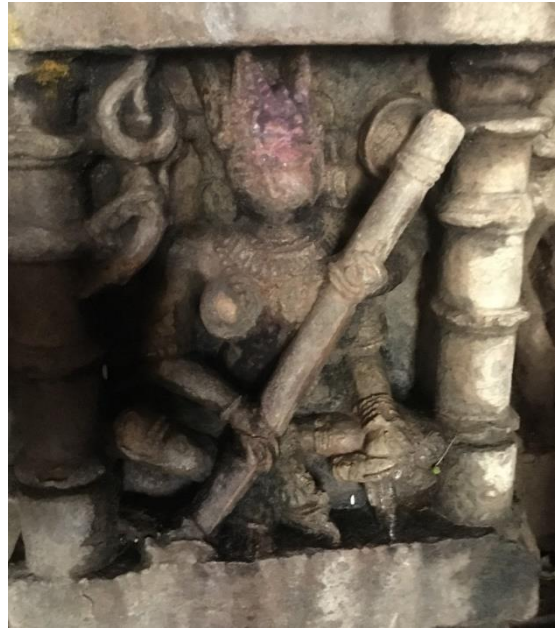


Figure 5. Dulha dev temple.(at the bottom door of Garbha grih)



Figure 3. Kandariya temple (North facing wall)



Figure 6 : Dulha –Dev temple (celestial nymph playing veena on outer south facing wall)



Figure 7 : Lakshman temple(outer circumbulatory path)

II. REFERENCES

ⁱ K. Reddeppa, *Musical Instruments Depicted in the Vijayanagara Temples of Rayalaseema*.

ⁱⁱ B.C. Deva, *Musical Instruments*, National Book Trust, India, New Delhi, 2012, pp. 90-91.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Ibid.*, Verse 171, p.416.