

Study on Stylistic Evolution of Sitar Baaj in 20th and 21st Century

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Abstract – Indian classical music from its inception till date has gone through various phases of transformations and transitions so the sitar music is. In the process it has embraced and rejected a number of features with maintaining an absolute balance with the old age tradition. From physical structures, playing styles (baaj) to its place in the world of Indian music the instrument has gone through the sea changes in the musical history. In 20th and 21st century in the world of globalization with the course of economic flexibility and advancement of technology, society leads to the incorporation of western values, ideas, technologies and institutions and commoditization of art and music. My thesis “The Stylistic evolution of sitar baaj in 20th and 21st century” aimed at the holistic research of different aspects of sitar music. The research will also try to unfold the musical and non-musical factors worked behind this process of transition.

Keywords: Sitar Baaj, Incorporation, Indian, Technology, Classical

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INTRODUCTION

In Indian classical music the term ‘style’ typically represents the gharana. That’s the group of musicians following a particular manner of music presentation. But as a matter of fact the established styles are not just what defined gharanas are. With the foundation of Gharanas’ conventional learning individual distinctive identity has always claimed its space in the history of musical styles in Indian classical music. A complete music is established on the foundation of traditional learning and the individual musicality. And technically this is what defines the term ‘Baaj’. It is consisted of “matter” (babat) what is played and “manner” (tarika) how to play and how the listener take or perceive the performance. Matter and manner together is baaj.

BAAJ

The term “Baaj” in English can be translated as the “style” or the mode of playing. In a broader sense this is the technique used in performance which results from a particular manner in which music is performed or expressed. It includes the overall aspects of the music performances like:

Seating Position

The basic and most important aspect of instrumental music is the holding of the instrument/ how we seat? In Sitar there are mostly two patterns of holding the

instrument. Usually the instrument is hold folding the left leg beneath the right hip and keeping the right leg on the left. The sitar is place on the sole of the left leg and the sitar is controlled by pressing the right elbow. But what makes the two different styles is the placement of the sitar over thigh.

One group of tradition keeps the sitar vertically without taking the support of the thigh like Pt. Ravi Shankarji. This style is followed by many styles of playing like mahiar, vishnupur, Banaras etc.

Right hand Bol Patterns

From the status of an accompanying instrument to the present status the instrument has undergone various additions in its boli-patterns which is the life of the instrument sitar. The basic bols which are used in its various permutation and combination are:

da (inward stroke in the right index finger) **ra** (outward stroke in the right index finger) **dar** (da followed by shortened ra)

dir (da and ra played in quick succession)

rda (The ra followed by da in quick succession)

Khatka- Literally means ‘Fear’, ‘suspicion’ etc. Musically it is a variety of Sabdalankara in the

form of a knot, so to say to decorate another note e.g. SNRSNS, the 'knot' of notes 'SNRSN' written on the top left corner of S to decorate it and is produced so quickly as to appear almost a single note, although it is a phrase of notes. A Khatka has similarity to both the murki and thekana.

Murki-The murki is a fast ornamentation around the principal note and consist of a number of elided swara-s. The Murki is a short sharp figure of two or three notes so uttered that it occurs within a short span of time wrapping around the central note, that is on either side of the central note. It can best be described as quavering notes, including microtones. It is therefore, heard as a quick light thrill with its western equivalence as the acciaccatura or battimento. When a serious murkis are performed in quick succession they lead to theZamzama.

dir da dir da ra da da ra dir da dir da ra da dara

Maseetkhani Bol Pattern

After Masit Khan during the period of Ali Raza khan of Rezakhani gat the sitar music exhibited a dynamic balance between its musical structure based on thumri and khayal and the tantrakaari elements like bolbant, tana, jhala with high speed and the perfect right hand techniques with the bolpattern-

RazakhaniBol Pattern

Set in teen talrezakhani gats are played in fast tempo. Small todas are played after razakhani gats to be followed by bigger todas. More intricate and complicated tanas are played after the todas. Gat vistara in a rhythmic pattern is rendered like bol-banao and bol-bant which is followed by uapajatanas. As the speed of the gats gets faster, double note tanas in dirdir are usually introduced. Finally the jhala starts in which the chikari plays a significant role. Among the Senias the last two features of the Razakhani gats are derived from the Veena. The tanas in dir- dir are played on this line of Ladi, lag-Lapet and Lad-guthao of the Veena anga. (Chakraborty 2012).

Left Hand Techniques

A Raga is perfectly articulated with the expert amalgam of right and left hand techniques in sitar playing. It won't be wrong to say that the across the board the sitar playing is based on the bedrock of these two. There are distinguished left hand techniques used like Meend, Gamak, Krintan, Zamzama etc.

Meend/Mid: When the left forefinger or the middle finger, or sometimes both, press upon a fret on the main string which is struck once to produce a sound, the left finger thus pressing the string on the fret pull it outwards, the note or notes higher in pitch than the

usual note as indicated on the fret are produced before the vibration of the string caused by a single stroke dies out, this way of producing different notes by pulling the strings outward is called Meend or mid

FORMAT OF INSTRUMENTAL PRESENTATION

Thokjhala- This is a variety of Jhala . In Jhala we have a drone background against which a melody is played. Whatever rhythm sense filters through the ears is produced by the variation and alternation of strokes on the drone strings and the main strings or strings which can be called melody strings i.e. Melody is produced on these strings and the rest are either drones or sympathetic strings. At this stage i.e. Thoka, rhythmic variation is produced mostly by varieties of strokes that invite more than cursory attention; sometimes the beauty of these –varieties completely overshadows the melodic portion. The strokes on the main strings produce complex rhythmic sounds. Although the raga composition is always there, yet it is kept subordinate to the rhythm produced by stroke varieties and alternate strokes played on Chikari as in jhala. From this phase the importance of rhythmic slowly replaced that of melody. The word 'Thoka' is derived from a Hindi word the meaning of which is 'To stroke'.

Alap

Alap in instrument music or to be specific in sitar music indicates altogether Alap , Jod and Jhala. Although alapiii are anibadha (devoid of rhythm) it moves with rhythmic cycles. On the basis of the melodic features there are thirteen angas of a complete alap viz vilambit, Madhya, drut, jhala, thok, ladi, ladguthi, ladlapet, paran, sath,dhya,matha and parmatha. There angas are rarely maintained in the modern alap. On the basis of this rhythmic structure the phases of alap can be discussed in three parts.

Mohra- Mohra is a particular composition used in instrumental and vocal alap. This is an anchor connecting the one phrase to the other in the vistaar of alap following a particular rhythmic pattern. Sa is the strongest note in Mohra since it rest on the Sa like–

S - S - SN SN R S-

da - da - da dadada–notes up to Ni of the maddhyaSaptak or the middle register and

Antara-The second part, called antaraa, is the delineation of the Raga from the high **Sa** onwards, dwelling upon the notes of the TaaraSaptaka or the highregister.

Jod

Jod introduces rhythm but with no fixed meter, although a duple feeling is usually implied. The phase is a perfect combination of the melody and rhythm altogether. It has two parts –

- Sanchari- a quick recapitulation of the asthai in one longer span of phrases, usually beginning in dha or ni in the low or the midregister.
- Abhog- joined to the sanchari, begins like the antara and quickly explores the very highest (or lowest) extremes of an instrument's (and raga's) registers. Abhog introduced in the jod, carried out through to thejhala

Vilambit Gat

The gats introduce beat (tabla) usually in the raga alap was done. Sometimes sitarist like Pt. Ravi Shankar performed alap-jod-jhala in a particular raga and play vilambit in a different raga. Tabla enters with uthan5, a separately stroked introductory movement which builds to a small introductory climax on the downbeat (sam) mostly after the one cycle of the gat. It begins Maseetkhani gat in teental with comparatively low speed and the speed gradually increases in a systematic progression called vistara in the sthai- antara form. The antara may be pre-composed sometimes sanchari-abhog also added. First few lines many

Uthan-Uthan is the composition which is played at the commencement of tabla Solo recital or at the time of instrumental. This composition is like a tukda but bigger in size and with different fold (where different portions of the compositions are set to different laya-s) having with special effective splashing bol-s in it. (Sengupta2011)highlight the mukhra (opening phrase of the gat) by embellishing the principle movement of the gat melody in short tans in the same rhythmic movement as the gat. In the second stage may develop the raga by phrase as in the alap, but ideally without exactly duplication of those alap movements with some introduction of rhythmic variation in the vistar.

OBJECTIVES

After going through the above literature, we have focused on the following objectives in our study. These are:

- The holistic research of different aspects of sitar music
- The Study of conventional learning and the individual musicality

CONCLUSION

Despite excellent coverage in modern and ultra-modern media of events and programmers concerning and covering Indian Classical Music which was unthinkable a few decades ago, it has not been possible to create optimism in the minds of young generation of scholars and practitioners in classical musical traditions about the future of these great Indian cultural traditions. It is true that no amount of quantitative projection of events and exponents of Indian classical music has succeeded in hiding the difficulties and hardships the exponents and their disciplined disciples have to go through despite visible coverage in electronic media of specific events. The changing times of the day have put forth formidable challenges which they alone can't meet entirely on their own. There are the extra-musical factors might have contributed to the growth and advancement of classical music at any point of time in history. Our contemporary time can't find any exception. There are many factors exist than the technical matters which leads toward the development and growth of Indian classical music. So the purpose is certainly not to blame any generation but to understand and appreciate the situations/circumstances and challenges any generation has to confront with particularly when several factors around us try to influence and intervene in the processes of classical music.

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