

Study on Sitar Instrument and Musical Archives

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Abstract – “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. The work has used Qualitative methods of the data collection for critical assessment of music during the stated period of research acquainting myself with the field situation by taking help of participation observation. The research data collection was primary focused on personal interviews of various artist of different fields related to sitar music. Different libraries, journals, Websites, Musical archives, Music from the sources like You Tube and personal collections were accessed and analysed. Many notations are analysed with specific reference to the ‘style’ analysis for a scientific assessment.

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

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INTRODUCTION

The instruments are classified on the basis of different criteria like; material of the construction, method of playing, functional use and many other factors. He divided the instruments as follows:

- Tata Vadya- Stretched instruments, such as thevina.
- Anaddha and avanaddha Vadya- covered instruments like the drums.
- SusiraVadya- Hollow instruments like the flutes.
- Ghana Vadya- Solid instruments such as bells and cymbals.

Musical instrument developed independently in many popular regions of the world. However contact among civilization resulted in the rapid spread and adaptation of most instruments in place far from its origin. Like; the middle age, instruments from Mesopotamia could be found in maritime south East Asia and Europeans were playing instruments from North America. Gradually they are being identified, studied and classified into categories according to its structure, material it is made up of or its use and so on. The oldest known schemes of classifying instruments are Chinese dated from 4th Century BC.

Story of the Indian instruments can be traced back to the ancient period the time of Veda in the history of Indian music. Although its repetitive and stereotype way of initiating the discussion of the musical and its

classification, no explanation of music could do justice before mentioning the definition of “Sangeet” (music).

Tata Vadya (String Instrument)

It is said that first stringed instrument invented by man was hunter's bow. As detailed by S. Krishnawami in the book ‘Musical instruments of India’ – ‘When the hunters shot his arrows, he must have noted that the bowstring produced a pleasant humming sound. If he twanged the bowstring near the cavity of the mouth, the sound was amplified. If he rested the bow on some hollow object, the resonance increased still further. The next discovery probably was the sound varied with the length of the string. String of the varying length must then have been attached to the hunting bow. Thus must have evolved the basic principle of the world- famous harp. The fact that a piece of skin stretched over the hollow body such as a pot produces a sound of relatively great volume when caused to vibrate was known to man very early. He used this principle to increase the volume of sound by fastening one end of the string to the drum and thus invented a kind of resonator. He gave one end of the bow the shape of a hollow boat and stretched skin tightly over it. Several strings were merely tied around the bow shaft and could be tuned only by an elaborate process of unfastening and refastening. This type of bow-shaped veena was apparently very widely used in ancient India as it is frequently represented in sculpture dating from the 3rd Century B.C. (Krishnaswami 1915).

Gatkari- To play gats on sitar and other stringed instruments elaborately and beautifully. There are various gats in the solo performance in percussion. Gourd on the upper part of the daand, which also helped in making the sound of the sitar more resonant and sweet (Lata 2013).

There is also mention of two types of Sitar to be existed around the beginning of 20th Century, sitar with round gourd (Gol tumba) and sitar with the flat gourd (cheptatumba). The flat gourd sitar resembled the shape of the tortoise (kachhua). But this type of sitar was not in use for a long time. Sitar continued to be with round gourd since 1950.

Sitar

Sitar is one of the popular instruments of the Indian Classical musical tradition. From its outset till date it has gone through various changes in its physical structure and its playing techniques. Through the four centuries of its evolution from the status of an accompanying instrument it has gradually acquired highest level of sophistication giving itself the identity of an independent solo instrument. From Masit Khan to the present, many exponents/players have thought towards refinement of the existing status of the instrument according to their musical and aesthetical needs and have contributed significantly to its shape and baaj.

ORIGIN

There are various notions about the origin of Sitar. Since ages it has been a good topic of discussion in the history of Indian Classical Music. A Good number of researches have already been done on this.

MORDEN SITAR

20th Century, considered as the golden period of sitar music has witness a revolutionary changes in its physical structure along with the baaj. The tantrakari and gayaki trend reshaped sitar in many ways. Ustaad Vilayat Khan gave a new face to the sitar making it a singing instrument. The changes he brought are:

- In order to improve the instrument acoustically to execute the vocal characteristics better Tabla was made thicker, daand was also made thicker.
- He replaced the Bass fret to German silver to make it stronger.
- Taar Gahan was made thicker and the curvature was modified to bear the strong left hand pull.
- The seven string sitar was made into six string sitar. One jod string was removed with the view to have less vibrant jod sound and giving a greater scope for clearer execution of the

bol-s providing a greater distance between madhyam and jod. He replaced the kharajpancham string by a steel string. The string position and tuning was made like

GANDHARPANCHAM SITAR

The second kaan (peg) is not used. One jod was removed with the view to have less vibrant jod sound and giving a greater scope for clearer execution of the bol-s by providing a greater distance between madhyam and jod. Third kaan is used for the second string. Physical changes strive for the vocalizing the sitar music. In order to accomplish this Ustaad Vilayat Khan propounded multiple of changes in baaj.

KHARAJ PANCHAM SITAR

His contemporary Pt. Ravi Shankar also remodeled the modern sitar according to his aesthetical needs.

Although he was not the first to use but promoted the thicker kharaj string more to do justice to different styles of been, sursringaar, rabab and surbahar playing in sitar. This is pertinent to mention here that exponents before like Yusuf Ali Khan and Rameshwar Pathak are known to use kharaj string before Panditji.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Pt. Ravi Shankar (Slawek, 1991). Born in a Bengali family in Varanasi Pandit Ravi Shankar began his music career accompanying with his brother Uday Shankar. His thrust for Sitar music took him to Ustad Alla uddin Khan, where he learnt traditional gurukul parampara in Mihar. Under the guidance of Babat the knowledge of traditional dhrupad, dhamar, khyal techniques enriched along with the broad approach of acceptance and openness Panditji reached to the zenith of the Indian classical music. Celebrated with the awards like Bharat Ratna, Grammy and many more Panditji acted as a mediator between the Indian music and the west. He put an indelible mark in the history of India music by popularizing the instrument and Indian music in the global scenario. Panditji stood as a role model for numerous Hindustani musicians of the younger generation. This has resulted not only in his playing style becoming one of the most widely emulated, but also in the adoption of certain stage mannerism and other behavioral traits by young musicians..

Bilaas Khan's grandson **Karim Khan** had two sons Sudhar Khan and Raajras Khan. Rajras Khan's Son is Maseet Khan. As mentioned before we can start the history of Sitar Baaj from the time of Maseet Khan. So this can be said that the history of the sitar music in the senia begins with Maseet Khan. Not only can the history of Senia rather the history of Sitar as a whole be commenced from the period of Maseet Khan. But After the falling of darbar of

Mohammad Shah in 1739 many Senimusicians left Delhi and took patronage under Raja Jai Singh of Jaipur. There Amrit Sen continued the tradition of sitar music. So he is considered the founder of the Jaipur Senia Gharana of Sitar, although there are confusions regarding this due to the lack of concrete information. As Dr. Sumita Chakravorty has mentioned about the confusing statement of Pt. Sudarshanacharya in her book "Instruments in Hindustani Classical Music; Roles and performances" – "Pandit Sudarshanacharya writes that Rahim Sen was the first in Tansen's line to play sitar. Before that sitar was played only by the descendents of Tansen's daughter Saraswati

Mustaq Ali Khan Centre for culture (2010) Ustaaad Mushtaq Ali Khan was a firm purist, immaculate in his conception of the raga in its pure sense and dexterous in his handling of sitar and surbahar. His innate sense of pride in his tradition would not allow him to change his style merely for winning favors and hate to compromises with time. (Choudhury, 2010). His name became synonymous with the senia style although he may actually have practiced an even more austere style than his predecessors in the gharana. He eschewed much of the ornamentation of modern sitar technique (such as murki, zam-zama), and embraced a clean, pure sound. His alap was constructed along the lines of a dhrupad alap, and his jodand jhala derived a lot from been (Rudra Veena) technique. Oddly enough, in spite of being a musical descendent of Maseet Sen, he rarely played maseetkhani gat in public, and none of the commercially available examples of his music includes one. He opted to play the faster Rezakhanigats instead, feeling that playing Masit Khanigats to an undiscerning audience would cause them to be devalued (Mushaq Ali Khan 2014). He was equally devoted to sitar, surbahar and Pakhwaj. He was the only surbahar player who used play in been ang with three mizravs with the accompaniment of Pakhwaj following the dhrupad tradition.

Pt. Nikhil Banerjee Padma Bhushan Pandit Nikhil Banerjee was one of the torch bearers of the Mahiar Gharana. Despite being the disciple of Baba Alauddin Khan Pt. Nikhil Banerjee had his own identical style of sitar playing from the other students of Baba like Pt. Ravi Shankar. Born in Calcutta in year 1931 in a Bengali Brahmin family Panditji started learning sitar from his father Jitendranath Banerjee, then from Birendra Kishor Roy Choudhury who used to sing dhrupad and used to play sur-sringar, rabab, been and surbahar. Since he was not exactly the practical performer of sitar and its techniques he himself suggested Nikhil Banerjee to better go to Maihar and learn from Alauddin Khan Sahab. In fact he first introduced him to Baba in 1947.

Since 1947 to his last breath he was the disciple of Baba who nurtured him with his music keeping Nikhil Banerjee's individuality intact. In his words "I have been asked, you and Ravi Shankar being disciples from the same person, why are both your styles and

approaches to music different? This is because my teacher understood. The first time when I went to Maihar, the first thing my teacher said 'I will channelize you in a different way; I will put you in a different way than Ravi Shankar. There will be no similarity.' Of course, the basis is same, about the raag and how we will handle the treatment of the raga- it is all the same, but the exposition is different, the style is different." (Landgarten 1991).

Bande Ali Khan- He belonged to the professional class of musicians known as dhadi. He is said to have been the greatest vina-payer of the nineteenth century. He was the son-in law of the famous khayal singer, Haddu Khan of Gwalior. The famous dhrupad singer, Zakiruddin Khan, was his son-in-law. Thus he had intimate contact with the greatest khayal singer and the greatest dhrupada singer of his time. Bande Ali Khan was justly reputed for his exquisite alapachari with its expressive minda and enrapturing gamaks in slow tempo. He was a peerless vina-payer. He was employed as a court-musician in Gwalior and later in Indore. Finally he went to Poona. There he passed away in about 1893 A.D. (D. T. Singh 1995).

The Lucknow gharana of sitar was led by Ustad Amir Khan (Gwalior) and later by Hamid Husain Khan. It is a lineage of sarod players of Shahjahanpur but the gharana has produced great sitar players like Ustad Ilyas Khan, Waliullah Khan and Yusuf Ali Khan. This is said that the follower of the gharana began playing sitar with two mizravs. Most of the compositions that they played were composed by the Senia gharana maestros. This is said that some players of the gharana were perhaps the earliest to incorporate thumri into the playing sitar (Kapoor 2013).

CONCLUSION

In the modern trend the music scholars are blessed with the technical advancement. They have the easy scope of listing to the persons whom they want be dead or alive, big archives and libraries. But the generation badly lacks is the proper training (taleem). It is said music itself is always in a process of transition. Often we come across a tendency in musical circles that classical music is an autonomous activity which has nothing to do with what is happening around it. But is it really that autonomous or is it an interdependent activity which while enriching itself from its association with other happenings in the society also in turn enriches the society and entertains social actors depending on the degree and intensity of social and cultural relationships prevalent at a particular time including the present one? Since the artist is a human being and very much part of the society, he can't be free from other social influences in the humane society he lives in. One can't afford to think that Music is above society and if we accept music more particularly

classical music as part of the society, may be learning about the future will be much better.

History suggests that classical music has witnessed changes within it. Can we dream of something which actually doesn't exist? We like it or not we can't deny the unavoidable reality of Change. "Change is the only ultimate truth". Like any other art classical music also has to evolve with the changing time. Be it in a different form than it used to be the music will exist as it has been through ages. The effort is to make the music long live and the will continue in the future too.

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