

Effect of North Indian Classical Ragas on the Compositions of Sufi Musical Genres



Niren Trivedi

Research Scholar, Department of Vocal, Faculty of Music,
Indira Kala Sangeet Vishwavidyalaya, Khairagarh, Chattisgarh

Abstract

The present research paper aims to throw light on how the Hindustani classical Raagas have had a deep impact and effect on the genres of Sufi music from the time of the origin of the genres like Qawwali, Hamd, Naat, Manqabat, ghazals, soz, marsiya, noha and other genres of the same till date. Qawwali, which became popular among the masses and is still played and recited by the qawwals at the shrines of the sufi saints starting from Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti or Khwaja Gareeb Nawaz in Ajmer started to be composed in Raagas from the very beginning including Qawwals like Ustad Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, Sabri Brothers, Shankar Shambhu and many others and it has deeply influenced the Indian film or Bollywood music. This will give an insight to how the compositions of these genres beginning from Man Qunto Maula in Raag Bhopali incorporated Raagas into them. Recordings from Youtube and other sources have been analyzed for the purpose.

Key words: Raagas, Sufi Music, Qawwali, Shrines, Sufi Saints.

Research Paper

Music and Religion

From the earliest, music and religion have been intertwined. This is true for almost all the religions across the globe. Whether we take the examples of the most primitive religious practices of the tribals in Africa, we will find extensive use of drum beating and singing to appease their tribal Gods. The case of Christianity and music is well-established. Carol singing and Gospel singing have been an integral part of their religion. These are taught in schools, and regularly practiced in Churches during mass and other religious occasions. In fact, the songs are often written in the local language and set to tune as per the usual carol tunes.

Right from the Vedic Era, music has been an essential component of practices in Hindu religion. From the chanting of Vedic Hymns, to singing of Bhajans even today, music has always played a part. In fact, the way Indian music has evolved from Vedic Era to today's Modern Era makes an interesting case study. The particular emphasis of preferably using Indian Classical Ragas (or Carnatic Music Ragas in case of Southern states) has been responsible for much of the development and evolution of Indian Music. The mass appeal of these compositions is remarkable.

Islam and its teachings also have embraced Music

always. Right from a highly musical 'Azaan', down to different forms of musical presentations in the name of the Almighty, we find music everywhere. Different forms like Qawwali, Naat, Ghazal, Marsiya, Noha etc. have been created to suit different occasions and moods. Some of these forms were absolutely unknown in the Indian musical scenario, but have now become an inseparable part of North Indian Music.

Sufism and Music

Sufism is a way of life which inculcates self-dedication, love, self-control and wisdom as vehicles to achieve the ultimate goal of enlightenment and union with the Almighty God, also evoking harmony and truthfulness among common masses. (Jagriti Luthra 1)

Sufi implies a wise person, pious or pure. Sufi Darveshs were the men of wisdom, who devoted their lives in pursuit of knowledge and attained acknowledged status in the world of Islam. With the passage of time, the tiny group developed into larger groups and established their schools called Rabats and Khanqahs, all over Arabia and Persia. (S. Ram and Masood Ali Khan 4)

When Sufism came to be fully established in India, respect and devotion towards the Sufis and their religious abodes manifested itself in the mind of the general public. Taking advantage of the emotions of the general

public, those who were initiated to Sufism as well as spiritual guides went from village to village spreading the tenets of Islam and the word of God, according to the holy Quran. The various Sufi traditions and Sufi Gharanas contributed extensively to Sufi poetry and Sufi music. The Sufi poets inculcated rhythmic music, melodious mode, tune, tone and sync in their literature and attracted the hearts of the music lovers.

Sufi poetry is recited by Sufis to enhance mystical awareness. Such poetry written in the "Classical Era" were by Arabic poet IBN-AL-FARID and Persian poets such as HAFIZ, SA'DI, JAMI and RUMI. RUMI, perhaps is the best known in the West for his monumental poetic works called the "Masnavi" and "Diwan-E-Shams Tabriz". A large number of Ghazals bear the name Shams Tabriz as the Takhallus and dominant theme is the ecstatic love of God. (Farida Khanam 51)

A detailed study of Sufi orders reveals that their poetry is generally bound by Indian Classical Music (Ragas). Most of their compositions have fair sprinkling of Indian Ragas; for instance, Ragas Shree, Manjh, Asa, Badahans, Gurjari, Mand, Sorat, Dhanashree, Jajjaiwanti, Tilang, Kanhada, Maru, Bilawal, Ramkali, Tukhari, Kedar, Bhairav, Devgandhari, Bhairavi, Asawari, Sindhura, Basant, Hindol, Sarang, Kalyan, Jhinjhoti, Paraj, Jog, Khat etc.. Some of the leading Sufi poets who made extensive use of Ragas in their poetry were Shah Hussain, Bulleh Shah, Khwaja Gulam Farid, Hazrat Amir Khusro etc. Many Sufis referred to Ragas as 'Swar' or 'Sur' and that is why the word Sur occurs prominently in their compositions, particularly as Sur Kalyan, Sur Yaman Kalyan, Sur Shree, Sur Sarang, Sur Bilawal, Sur Prabhati etc.

It should be clearly understood that the Sufi music, as it exists today comprises of not only the philosophy and thoughts of the Sufi saints of the gone-by era but also the words of saints from other religions including the thoughts of Guru Nanak, Surdas, Meera Bai and Kabir. This is indicative of the fact that Indians as such had an open mind and always welcomed fresh thoughts from other sources too. The mysticism of Sufi poets was further strengthened by the addition of mystic thoughts from the saints other than from the Sufi cadres and intermingling and interaction of thoughts from different sources went a long way to provide a further boost to the promotion of Sufism, Sufi music, Sufi poetry and Sufi literature in the Indian sub-continent. All Sufi saints, including those of the medieval period, as also the modern era have substantially contributed in consolidating and fortifying the edifice of Sufi culture in this country.

The first encounter of Indian music with Muslims was through Sufi saints who were attracted by the traditional Hindu temple music. The Sanatani practices heavily involved Music in one form or another. Whether in chanting "Shlokas", singing "Bhajans" or Hymns, or narrating Religious texts like "Ramayan" and "Mahabharat", or even various "Kathas" like "Bhagwat", the narrator always made great use of Music. In fact, many compositions were completely based on Classical Raags. Sensing that music was an essential feature of the daily lives of the local inhabitants, Sufis used music to spread the message of Islam across the populace of India. Sufi saints such as, Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti, Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya, Hazrat Bahauddin Zikaria Multani etc. held regular sessions of Shama or Qawwalis at their Khanqahs to propagate Islam to the masses.

The name of Hazrat Amir Khusro stands at the forefront of the Muslim contribution towards the culture of the sub-continent. Apart from being a great poet, he was also a musical genius who contributed greatly to the evolution of Indian Music. This is evidenced in the various "Kalaams" composed by him, exhibiting clear base of Raagas in them. In fact, some of the Raagas were evolved and named by the Sufi Musicians. The present paper aims to connect past and current Sufi compositions to various Indian Classical Raagas.

Research Methodology

To study the inclusion and influence of North Indian classical Ragas in Sufi music is the objective of this study. To this end, fifteen Sufi compositions were selected, spread over the last five decades. These recordings were heard and musically as well as critically analyzed to determine the connection with North Indian classical Ragas. Care was exercised in selecting the "Kaalams" for this study. Emphasis has been given to selecting Compositions of different Ustads or artists, as well as avoiding those having similar tunes. Here is the list of "Kaalams" chosen for analyses in the present Study:-

1. Aaj Rang Hai Re Ma Rang hai Ri
2. Is Karam Ka Karun Shukr Kaise Ada
3. Saanson Ki Mala Pe Simrun Main Pee Ka Naam
4. Aayi Naseeme Ku E Muhammad
5. Man Kunto Maula
6. Bhar Do Jholi Meri
7. Tajdaare Haram
8. Chhaap Tilak Sab Chheeni Re
9. Mere Sarkaar Aaye
10. Ya Muhammad Noor E Mujassam



11. Damadam Mast Kalandar
12. Kab Tak Mere Maula
13. Pee Le Jo Sharabe Ishqe Nabi
14. Aap Ke Dar Ko Chhod Kar
15. Sare La Makan Se Talab Hui

These compositions have been musically analyzed by putting down their Notations from the Harmonium, and determining the Raaga which appears to be the basis of the tune.

Results

One of the surprises thrown up from this analysis was that many compositions exist, which different artists have recorded in different decades, on completely identical tunes! In fact, some compositions are even credited to the original writer, Hazrat Amir Khusro, dating back to the 13th century! The detailed notations of these Kalaams are beyond the scope of this presentation. Briefly given below are the Kalaams and the Raaga which is the base Raaga for that Kalaam. Some Kalaams are loosely based on the given Raaga, while others are completely identified examples of the Raaga.

1. Aaj Rang Hai Re Ma Rang hai Ri
Original Composition, probably tune and lyrics by Hazrat Amir Khusro, based on Raag Jhinjhoti
2. Is Karam Ka Karun Shukr Kaise Ada
Original composition of Ustad Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, based on Raag Bilawal
3. Saanson Ki Mala Pe Simrun Main Pee Ka Naam
Original composition of Ustad Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, based on Raag Bhairavi
4. Aayi Naseem e Ku e Muhammad
Traditional composition based Raag Mishra Khamaj
5. Man Kunto Maula
Original Composition, probably by Hazrat Amir Khusro, based on Raag Bhoopali
6. Bhar Do Jholi Meri
Original probably by Sabri brothers, based on Raag Mishra Bhupali
7. Tajdaare Haram
Old composition, based on Raag Bhairavi
8. Chhaap Tilak Sab Chheeni Re
Original Composition, probably by Hazrat Amir Khusro, based on Raag Yaman
9. Mere Sarkaar Aaye
Old composition based on Raag Mishra Bhairavi
10. Ya Muhammad Noor E Mujassam

Probably composed by Sabri brothers, based on Raag Mishra Gara

11. Damadam Mast Kalandar
Traditional composition based on Raag Shuddh Kalyan
12. Kab Tak Mere Maula
Traditional composition, based on Raag Jangla Bhairavi
13. Pee Le Jo Sharabe Ishqe Nabi
Old composition based on Raag Mishra Kalavati
14. Aap Ke Dar Ko Chhod Kar
Old composition based on Raag Pahadi
15. Sare La Makan Se Talab Hui
Old composition based on Raag Khamaj

Discussions

As mentioned earlier, the basic objective of the Sufi saints was to spread the teachings of Islam and highlight the greatness of their religion among the Indian masses. Since Hindustani classical music already formed an integral part of the society in various ways, the Sufis also chose to base their compositions on them. This resulted in quick acceptance of the tenets of Islam by the population. In the process, these Sufi saints, who were also musically knowledgeable and talented, ended up modifying and improving Hindustani classical music in one form or another. Not only they contributed a few new Ragas, but also devised new styles like Qawwali, Khyal, Ghazal etc. And today we see these very styles as the most popular form of rendition of Hindustani music, classical or otherwise. So, we can say that this collaboration has led to gains for music.

References

1. Anuzsiya S. "Impact of Sufism Movement in Contemporary India". Department of History, University of Sri Lanka.
2. Khanam, Farida. "Sufism, An Introduction". Nico Bellic, Good Word Books, 2006. Reprinted in 2007.
3. Luthra, J. "Shodhganga@INFLIBNET: Contribution of Ustad Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan to Sufi Music". Shodhganga: a Reservoir of Indian Theses@INFLIBNET, 25 Apr. 2022
shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/handle/10603/375841.
4. Ram, S. and Masood Ali Khan, Sufism in India, Vol. 2, Anmol Publications, New Delhi (2003).
5. Ustad Raza Ali Khan. "Shakhsyat". Interviewed by Samina. Rajya Sabha TV. Youtube- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6KESbU_mmM&t=17s.