



Contribution of Pandit Jagdish Prasad to Hindustani classical music

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Abstract

Pandit Jagdish Prasad was one of the greatest vocalists of Patiala Gharana. Some say that he was the only one who came closest to matching the musical genius of Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali Khan. Pandit ji not only performed and propagated Bade Ghulam Ali Khan style and compositions, he also sang a range of compositions made by his father Pandit Badri Prasad, who was firstly the court musician of Patiala State and later was appointed in the Darbar of Chakradhar Singh, Maharaja of Raigarh, and hailed from the Talwandi Gharana, and he composed with pen name of 'Mano Piya'. He also preserved rare compositions from various artists of other Gharana. This research paper is to foreground and highlight the life, work and contribution of Pandit Jagdish Prasad to Hindustani Classical Music. Pandit Jagdish Prasad was one of the iconic Hindustani Vocalist of Patiala Gharana, who developed his own style of singing. Mixing the distinctive features of Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali Khan taans using speedy movement in case of short spiraling patterns spanning the entire range of vocalization, and his father's beautiful compositions and singing style of Talwandi Gharana. Pandit Jagdish Prasad's wife Smt. Sandhya Pandit and his son Shri Samrat Pandit were extensively interviewed, apart from that many of the accompanists, contemporary admirers-musicians from other gharanas, disciples were interviewed to collect information. Books having information about Patiala gharana and Pandit Jagdish Prasad were also reviewed. Pandit Jagdish Prasad is one of the most unheard artists, who didn't get the deserving recognition. He not only sang the unmatched gayaki of Bade Ghulam Ali Khan but also incorporated his father's composition and singing styles into his performance. He sang Ragas, which were not commonly sung in Patiala Gharana and preserved compositions from Bindadeen Maharaj, Muhammad Khan etc.

Keywords: Jagdish Prasad, Bade Ghulam Ali Khan, Patiala Gharana, Panjab-ang, tappa-ang

Research Paper

Pandit Jagdish Prasad was born on 9th September 1940 in Bilaspur, Chattisgarh (earlier in Madhya Pradesh). He was born into a family with illustrious musical lineage. His father, Pandit Badri Prasad was firstly the court musician of Patiala State and later was appointed in the Darbar of Chakradhar Singh, Maharaja of Raigarh, and hailed from the Talwandi Gharana. Pandit Jagdish Prasad gained his early tutelage from his father. However, he was hugely influenced by Bade Ghulam Ali Khan singing, which later became the cause of his estrangement from his family, starting a new musical journey in Mumbai.

As a child he regularly accompanied his father, a court musician of Raigarh. During one such visit, he fell asleep while someone was rendering Raga Bhairavi. Next morning when he woke up, the Raja chanced upon him and asked him to sing. "Taken by surprise, he rendered Bhairavi which was fresh in his ears. Happy, the Raja

rewarded him with a 100-rupee note. This was in the forties, when his father barely earned Rs 60 a month."^[1]

In an interview with Rakhi Banerjee, ^[2] Pandit ji tells some anecdotes of his childhood: 'in the court of Chakradhar Singh Maharaj, in Motimahal, Raigarh, the baithak would start around 8pm in the night and all the musicians would join and mark their presence. Raja would ask whoever he would like to perform, artists like Ashique Ali Khan, Muhammad Khan and Bade Ghulam Ali Khan saab's uncle, Ustad Kale Khan would be present, apart from that Ustad Inayat Khan and Bhure Khan (Sitarists), Ustad Munir Khan (Tabla) would also be present. There were a lot of great thumri singers also, however the best in his view was Muhammad Khan, he would specially go for his performance.'

He adds, 'Ashique Ali Khan Saab would come daily but wouldn't sing very often. But, when he did, nobody would contest him. Roshanara Begum would also

sing beautifully, both khayals and thumri's. So the Maharaja would indicate the artist before hand that he would like to listen to them and the artist would later then perform. Artist's like Shambhu Maharaj, Achhan Maharaj, Lachhu Maharaj, Bindadeen Maharaj would also be there, and artists like these will never exist on this earth', he said.

Pandit Jagdish Prasad sang a lot of rare compositions by these artists. He would often sing this *Manjh Khamaj* based *bhajan (shringar ras)*, with a *thumri ang*, written by Bindadeen Maharaj:

Nirtat Dhang
Ab bhaye pawan tan man mandh sugandh
Sital, bansi batatat nikat jamuna
Radhe gopi umang
Nirtant Dhang

Bhrikba nandani paap khandani
Koti ravi sam bhushan chamke
Zari ki saari sohe tan mei
Choli ang sohe tang
Nirtat Dhang

Brahmna ji shankh bajawe
Narad sharad sur uchare
Bhale shashi sir gang
Nirtat Dhang

Tum bin nath mohe kaun ubaare
Kaun hai aiso bipada tare
'Bindadeen' par kripa karo prabhu
Vaake dukh nahi ang
Nirtat Dhang... [3]

Jagdish Prasad adds, "Pensive listener's would only listen to Muhammad Khan's Thumri who sang like no other, he sings a small composition by Muhammad Khan, which was written by/for Maharaj Chakradhar Singh, having the pen name 'Chakra Piya'."

Thado thado bihari naari Dekhe
Na main boli na mai chaali
Naahak naahak raar karei
'Chakra piya' mohe duur basat hai
Mohe aaj piya se kaam
Thado thado...

'Muhammad Khan would sing each word in at least twenty variations'.

Pandit Jagdish Prasad also sang a lot of compositions made by his father Pandit Badri Prasad, who would write under the pen name of 'mano piya'. One of his compositions, composed in *Raag khamaj* is like:

Baiyan marori mori
Nand k kanhaiya mori
Pakde kalaiya mori

'Mano' kahat na mane binate karat haari mai
Ab kaise jaun gharwa

Another bandish in Raag Puriya:

Mano manoji tum mori baat
Raat Rahungi tore sath
Ab maina jaane dungi
Maano...

'Maano' kahat nit ghar sautan k
laaj na aayi mora chhuo na ghaat
maano [4]

It has been five decades since Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali Khan Saab died, but the indelible impression of his style in Pandit Jagdish Prasad's singing ran strong. It was in the early fifties, when young Pandit ji came to know that Khan Saab was on his way to Allahabad for a concert and was to pass through Jabalpur, where he lived. When the train arrived, he rushed into his bogie and expressed his desire to be his disciple. Khan saab asked Pandit ji to accompany him to Allahabad, and he travelled along with him. Pandit ji's parents came to know of his whereabouts only when his pictures were published in a newspaper, sharing tea with Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali Khan saab.

Beside Tulsi Sharma and Laxman Das, young Jagdish lived with Ustad bade Ghulam Ali Khan at his Walkeshwar residence taking music lessons from him. His *ganda-bandhan* ceremony could not performed because Ustadji had promised that he would do the honors in Jabalpur, but he died before it could be performed.

In Mumbai, he rigorously trained under Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali Khan and lived in the city for around 10 years. Thereafter, He moved to Kolkata and was one of the earliest research scholars in the ITC Sangeet Research academy for around 7 years, from 1977, till 1983, when he quit following differences and later taught at Khairagarh University, Madhya Pradesh. He performed all over India and internationally, and was given 'A' top Grade Rank in A.I.R. from Ranchi.[5]

Pandit Jagdish Prasad had been deeply influenced by Bade Ghulam Ali Khan. His vocalism had all the grace of Patiala Gharana. Jagdish Prasad created fine impression by his first LP of Gurjari Todi and Bageshri. But his second LP (ECSD 2872) was even more impressive than the first LP. On side one, he had recorded raga *Vachaspati* of Karnatak origin. This raga resembles *Yaman*, the only difference being that he also uses *Komal Nishad*. This raga has a lyrical grace and fluent *taans* of Patiala Gharana.

On side two, Jagdish Prasad has recorded *thumri Des* and *thumri Pahadi*. In the *thumris*, he showed conspicuous influence of Bade Ghulam Ali Khan. Jagdish Prasad sang his *Thumris* as brilliantly as *Khayal*.^[6]

It was here that a very salient characteristic of the Patiala *Gharana* came to the forefront: the influence of the *tappa*, a non-classical form in Hindustani art-music. The form is flashy. Intricate in intent, fast in movement, and light in touch, it therefore excels in producing an impact of an aural dazzle rather than an effect of any sustained musical power. Punjab is reputedly the home of this form and it was not surprising that Ustaaad Bade Ghulam Ali Khan incorporated aspects of *tappa* in his *taans*. Significantly, he did not sing *tappa*. It is obvious that it would have been a musical repetition to have *tappa*-oriented *taans* in *Khayal* and again present *tappa* as an independent musical item.^[7]



Ali Baksh and Fateh Ali were friends. They were known as Aliya-Fattu. Patiala school derives its inspiration from Aliya-Fattu who had a rich and powerful voice. They specialized in powerful and ultra-fast *taans*, which included patterns, borrowed from *tappa*. These fast figures provided inspiration for all subsequent Patiala singers.

Ever since, Patiala *Gharana* laid emphasis on intricacy of melody, its best exponent was Bade Ghulam Ali

Pandit Jagdish Prasad was among the leading singers who had preserved the Patiala Vocalism. Although Bade Ghulam Ali Khan never really sang *tappa* as an independent item in a performance, Pandit Jagdish Prasad had an extra ordinary talent to present *tappa* in a colorful way. In an interview with Pandit Nayan Ghosh, ^[8] on individuality, he says, “Individuality comes after many years of practice, training, assimilating, further deeper thinking and it would come after a big experience of performing. Initially for several years a

young musician is kind of emulating his/her Guru or idol that he/she has in mind and they go on that track for several years and gradually if the person is really well trained and well equipped, with a lot of good material and musical talent, that innate musicality also has to be there, and then a musician can achieve a distinct place for himself/herself.”

On tappa he says, “For *tappa*, I wouldn’t really put into the semi classical format. The kind of skill it requires and the way it is structured, there’s nothing wrong to put it in the classical format, as it is certainly a difficult than *thumri*. One needs tremendous practice and *tayyari*, as they are not simple *taans*, but they are quicksilver *taans*. I have heard many great musicians of the past singing *tappa*. Even the recordings of singers like Siddheshwari Devi and Krishna Rao Shankar Pandit and so on. But one artist who’s voice really excelled as a *tappa* singer was a very dear friend of mine and one of the finest vocalist of India, Pandit Jagdish Prasad. He was a very brilliant, colorful and a very imaginative singer, and what was great about him was that his voice cooperated with his imagination. Once I heard *tappa* from him, my whole understanding of *tappa* changed considerably and I felt that it was such a beautiful form of music”.

Pandit ji was also very close to Pandit Bimlendu Mukherjee and would also go to teach *tappas* on Sitar, to Pandit Budhaditya Mukherjee the son of Pt. Bimlendu Mukherjee.

He also composed many *bandishein*, some of them are:

Raag Jaijaiwant, and set into Jhaptaal (10 beats) is

Shankar Mahadev keejo daya mope

Saaje trishool sheesh Chandra biraaje

Gale shesh saaje

Raag marwa, teental

Ghar na aaye sham piya dar lage

Un bin maika kachhu na suhave

Honwan lagi sanjh gwaal sab aaye

Baal sab aaye, sang naa aaye sham

Pandit Jagdish Prasad had a resonant voice ideally suited for *thumri*. He sang *thumris* of not only composed by Bade Ghulam Ali Khan but also sang other traditional compositions like ‘*kadar piya kaise paaun*’, ‘*More Naina bhar bhar aaye*’ etc. He would often include Panjabi couplets and who sometime do melodious

sargams, which was not common Punjab *ang* *thumris*. His imagination allowed him to take iconic compositions into a space more deep and intense.

Thumri as a semi classical form is divided into two *angs*: the *Purbi ang*, which dwells in the realm of compositions from the state of Banaras and Lucknow. And the other one being the ‘*Punjab ang*’ which is more *sufi* and *tappa* based. Because of Pandit ji’s affiliation from Kishan Maharaj, Achhan Maharaj and Bindadeen Maharaj, he also picked some of the composition from Banaras and Gwalior Gharana.

Pandit Jagdish Prasad had the voice with combination of baritone, yet there would be a natural ‘*Zavari*’, which could work against a Hindustani classical musician, however that was opposite in the case of Panditji.^[9] He would sing *taans*, which were intricately arranged like a web without any seeming effort or bodily movements. Smt. Sandhya Pandit says while the time Pandit ji was in ITC, contemporaries would shower a lot of compliments and Girija Devi would say, “*Aap to gaana Chhupa k gaate ho*” translating that you sing so fluently, without any pretension.

Pandit Jagdish Prasad earned immense regards from the contemporaries of the fraternity for his mellifluous voice, inimitable and effortless style of presentation and earnest dedication towards the craft. He not only sang the compositions of Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali Khan Sahib and Patiala Gharana, but revived and preserved traditional compositions of his family and artists of other gharanas as well. He trained many disciples who were not only from West Bengal but also from all corners of the world. In spite of his high achievements, he led a humble life, away from the unprecedented recognitions, believing in the saying, “art speaks for itself”.

Panditji was caught in the internal politics that was prevailing in ITC that time, which stalled the growth of his career in Kolkata. Apart from that, they also made sure that an artist of his caliber, would not come in the limelight and used their political influence to do so. This led to marginalization of the artist during and after his days and ensured that he remains as a minor and forgotten figure in the world of Indian classical music.^[10]

Pandit Jagdish Prasad’s music and contribution is an invaluable treasure trove to the country’s heritage. His efforts towards preserving the legacy of Indian classical music should not go unrecognized. As a matter of fact Pandit ji was an integral part of the nomination committee for ‘*Kalidas Samman*’ for many years, however it is a pity that he himself was bereft of the honor.

Recordings

- Dawning Dewdrops (2011) (Label: Questz World): Ragas: Gurjari Todi, Bhatiyar & Kafi Thumri
- Shraddhanjali (2 CDs) (2011) (Label: Saregama India): Ragas: Bageshri, Gujri Todi, Bhairavi Thumri, Vacahspati, Desh Thumri, Pahadi Thumri
- Greatest thumris, songs of Love (CD) (Label: Saregama India)
- Jewels of jewels. Pandit Jagdish Prasad (label: Bihaan Music) (1CD)
Raaga Madukosh, Yaman, Khamaj Thumri.

Conclusion

Pandit Jagdish Prasad was a multi-faceted artist, with a unique expression and aesthetical understanding of Raag, Raagdari, different genres and compositions, and was a true performer who could bind his audience for hours, yet wanting more. His presentation of a Raag was spontaneous and not predefined or repetitive. His effortless and laid back attitude would reflect in his singing and had a charismatic voice to support that. The amalgamation of Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali Khan's musical genius and the classical knowledge from his ancestors gave him an edge and made him the terrific vocalist that he was.

Often after a Musical legend like Bade Ghulam Ali Khan, in a Gharana, it is hard to live up to the standards. Often disciples and predecessors are foreshadowed. People also start comparing constantly and to gain visibility and sustainability, it is crucial to evolve one's art to a level above the contemporaries. Pandit Jagdish Prasad successfully achieved that distinction and showers of praises from all across the world, yet unfortunately is one of the most unheard artist among the young generation of musicians and admirers of Hindustani Classical music.

Pandit Jagdish Prasad would commonly sing iconic compositions of Bade Ghulam Ali Khan and would add his flavor, which would elevate its value. Pandit ji had the caliber of breaking the confines of gharana, and easily create and deliver renditions comprising rare and traditional compositions from the under-rated composers and musicologists. He believed in finding the new ways of exploration in existing raag-s and presenting them with ease and harmony.

His Son Shri Samrat Pandit, who has a mirror sound as Pandit ji, outlives Pandit Jagdish Prasad. Samrat ji has performed all over the world, perpetuating the legendary style of his father.

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10. Interviewed Chowdhury, Shamresh Kolkata on January 26, 2019, 11:00 hrs.