

Origin and evolution of Tarana genre: With special reference to Hazrat Amir Khusrau and Dilli gharana



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Abstract

Tarana style of singing has been very pertinent in the pastures of Hindustani Classical Music. Believed to be a very pleasant form of singing, it has been adapted and sung by the maestros of Indian Classical Music which has created lasting impressions on the hearts and souls of countless ardent music lovers for centuries. This research aims to study the chronological unfolding of Tarana genre. The research also explores the possible influence of Hazrat Amir Khusrau on this popular art form and how the tradition marking its beginning from Khusrau, known as Dilli Gharana, has been carrying forward the rich legacy of this genre. For this purpose, the primary data has been through structured personal interviews of veteran music scholars and classical musicians. Along with this, rigorous review of literature has been done to identify the research gaps to be filled through the primary data of this research. The findings suggest that though there have been available references of Tarana in bit parts but none of those provide the overall holistic clear picture of how it developed. Majority of the sources and documented evidences indicate towards Khusrau being the starting point of Tarana style of Gayaki. This has even been validated by the music scholars and classical musicians during the extensive interviews.

Keywords: Khusrau, Tarana, Evolution, Influence, Dilli Gharana

Research Paper

Introduction

Music Composition holds a very special place in Indian Classical Music and is treated as a very important element. The various forms of Indian classical art forms emerge when we present the various Ragas in the form of these musical compositions. The emerging art forms include Dhrupad, Dhamaar, Khyal, Tarana, Saadra and the semi-classical variants including Thumri, Dadra, Tappa, Kajri, Chaeti and the Sugam Sangeet forms like Ghazal, Bhajan etc. Tansen, Sadarang, Adarang, Manrang, Har Rang and Shori Miyan have been the notable proponents of this field. The modern era too witnessed various new creations during which we got to hear plenty of new compositions. One such important creation was tarana. Tarana is a very popular musical variant of Hindustani Classical Music. Musical notations presented through a combination of a Raagas/scales with very complex literature in a rhythm-bound

structure, is considered as tarana. It is believed to be a musical variant that has the power to grab the attention of the people and hence as soon as tarana singing starts; people tend to set themselves straight to enjoy the beauty of this variant. In Hindustani Classical Music, the only variant that has the tag of 'evergreen' attributed with it, is the 'Tarana'. The emergence of any art form or a style and their birth has always been the outcome of the assimilating changes over a long period. The newly emerged art forms always carry in them the elements of the art forms existing prior to them. The existing styles always get influenced by the culture of the society in which people live and the interest of the people. There are many anecdotes popular amongst the people regarding the birth and development of the Tarana style of singing, but it is imperative to know the meaning of word Tarana and its use and journey in the world of Indian Classical Music before moving on to validate or burst the popular myths pertaining to Tarana style of singing.

Connotation of Tarana

Tarana is a Persian word which means 'to sing', especially a distinct form of song. (Bannerji 14) Tarana is also known as Tillana. Another word similar to Tarana is "Tarannum", and this word is an Arabic word. It means खश इलहानी (खशु-आवाज, कलख, कलकंठ), हल्कागाना और मधुर गान (Usmani, Kumar). Tillana is not an Indian term. Tilla is a Persian word which means something which is coated with gold and which is of golden colour. It is possible that because of the rich legacy of Tarana and because of its importance, the term Tillana would have emerged due to the words like Tila or Tilai. According to Nalanda Vishal Shabd Sagar, Tarana is believed to be a word of the Persian language. Tarana bears a significant relationship with notations and words. It appears that the origin of the word Tarana has neither been in Hindi language nor in the Sanskrit language. Rather it has Persian origin. This word originated only with the entry of the outsiders in India and gained massive popularity. Similar variants had always been existing in the name of Nirgeet and Bahirgeet, which were already popular in India. (Bannerji 13) Tarana is a popular style of North Indian Classical Music. While in the southern part of the country, it is popular as 'Tillana'. Tillana too does not bear Indian origin. (Bannerji 10) Tilla is a word in Persian language which means gold. Tilai on the other hand means something that is coated with gold and is of golden colour as mentioned above. In other words, it is known as 'The Work of Kalavattu'. Even today, we use the phrases like 'Marked in Golden Words' and it highlights its significance even today. It is very much possible that the superiority, significance and popularity of the ancient style of Tarana led to the emergence of the word Tila and Tilai and the combination of the two may have given birth to the word Tillana and addressing this creative form of singing as Tillana must have been started by the outsiders and gradually it must have become a word depicting a specific and definite style of singing. It shows that Tillana is not Indian. There is no contextual meaning and usage of words like 'Tom', 'Tana' in language. Therefore, for the outsiders, its meaninglessness in the context of language but its beauty in the form of its melody, called it Tarana. Tillana form of music is performed in various parts of the north of Karnataka. Tillana means चोल्लुक्केट्टुओ (words) that are presented in various interesting and magical forms.

In Bengali language, Tarana is known as Telena. There are references claiming that some poetry were presented in the form of Tarana and in case of Tillana, entire presentation

was done using meaningless words (Bannerji 21). Based on the facts mentioned above, it becomes clearly evident that the present-day word 'Tarana' is a Persian word which was popular as Nirgeet and Baheergeet in Indian classical music in the ancient era. Tarana style of music has always existed in one form or the other. It is used in both the Indian classical art forms; Hindustani in north of India and in Carnatic that belongs to the southern part of India. It is also believed that it has always been used in either forms in the three art forms including singing, instrumental music and dancing.

Rise and Development

After knowing the meaning of the word 'Tarana', it is necessary to know about its origin and development. There has been different opinions of eminent scholars in this context, which are mentioned as follows:-

- ❖ According to the opinion of some scholars, 'Tarana' is derived from the word 'Tarannam'. When a poet sings his composition. So he uses a special type of melody, that same melody is called 'Tarannam'. (Vaankaran 27)
- ❖ In case of Tarana music, the alphabets used are Na Dir Dir Tom, Ta Na Na, Derena, Tadare, Dani, Tadeem, O Dani, Dare Dani, Tadiyan Re, Yaali, Ali-Alla etc. It is believed that these are the Beej Mantras of Arabic language which are used primarily for praying to the 'Allah' or the 'Nabi'. In the context of the meaningless words, a few musicologists believe that 'Ta Na Ri R Non/ Nom' etc represent the Mool Mantras 'Anant Hari Om'. The gist of the matter is that the words of the Indian mantra 'Om Narayan Anant Hari' are also such that their modern form is recited in the Alaaps of 'Nom - Tom'. (Madaan 115) In addition to this, Tarana also possesses the Bol of the instruments like Dir Dir Dre and Bol of Tabla and Pakhawaj like Dha Tirkit Tak Dhum Tak Nakdhi Dhidnak Kdanadha etc very often.
- ❖ Bhairavprasad Srivastava Ji in 'गायन का सर्वांगपूर्ण राग गायन' claims that extension of the Raag using the Nom Tom Tanana was started by the world known and best vocalist Miyan Tansen. There is a related anecdote once, on the behest of King Akbar, Tansen recited Raag Deepak after which his body temperature started soaring high. Many doctors and medicos were called to treat him but none of them could bring down the body temperature of Tansen. Seeking apology from Tansen, Akbar asked him about the possible



solution to this problem, to which he replied that it would require somebody to recite Raag Megh Malhar so that he can take a shower under the falling rain. That would bring his temperature down. The question however was that who would be capable of reciting Raag Megh Malhar, they would have to travel across the length and breadth of the country to find somebody capable. Seeing the pitiable condition of Tansen, Akbar rendered the permission and a caravan along with Tansen left in search of one such talent. From Rajasthan, the caravan reached Gujrat. There they witnessed some women fetching water from the wells. The caravan stopped there, as drinking water was not proving to be sufficient to improve the condition of Tansen. He was, every now and then, asking for water. Tansen then went to the ladies and asked them to allow him to drink water. On reaching them, one of the women pointed out to the condition of Tansen and said that it appeared like it is due to Raag Deepak. This caught the attention of Tansen immediately and he asked all the ladies to introduce themselves. The two women introduced themselves as Tani and Nani. Tani was the elder sister while Nani was the younger one. There are a few disagreements over the names as a different school of thought believes them to be Tana-Riri. The two girls then asked Tansen why did he recite Raag Deepak after consuming food despite knowing everything. The girls agreed to sing Raag Megh Malhar on one condition that he will never reveal their identities. They recited Raag Megh Malhar and it started pouring heavily and his condition improved. This however could not remain a secret from Akbar and he asked Tansen to call the two girls. Tansen was embarrassed to face the two girls and the two girls told him that they have made up their mind regarding it and that he will come to know about it later. After that they performed in the court of Akbar and mesmerized him completely. Very smartly, both the girls pulled daggers out and stabbed themselves. They ended their lives. It may be true that the two girls may have been great vocalists and they may have impressed Tansen. Tansen's Dhrupad singing still uses Tana-Riri in Nom-Tom which shows the fulfilment of the promise made by Tansen to the two girls that no matter what, those two will always remain alive through his singing. Tansen started the tradition of singing 'Tom-TanaNana' instead of 'Om Namō Narayan' to make the

name of the two sisters immortal. From there, the tradition of notes extension started. This is where through the arrangement of NomTom, Tarana singing came into existence.

- ❖ One popular viewpoint also believes that the folk music of Jammu-Kashmir is called Tarana.
- ❖ There are also references regarding the 5th Century (as per Natyashastra by Bharat) literature using abbreviated verses like

‘दिग्ले दिग्ले झुँ टुँ झुँ टुँ जम्बुक वलित्तक तेत्तेनाम।’ (Bannerji 11)
(भरत, ब. पृ 79)

The literature suggests that the initial forms of Tarana singing and its literature was already present in the Indian music system way before it became popular.

- ❖ There is also another popular opinion that the origin of word Tarana is related to Hazrat Amir Khusrau. Amir Khusrau is seen as the inventor of Tarana just like he is seen as the inventor of some Instruments, Raagas and Taal. (Rekhta, Shushterey 217)

The above mentioned belief related to Hazrat Amir Khusrau and Tarana genre is widely accepted by majority of scholars and performers in the field of Indian Classical Music.

According to Abu Fazal, Amir Khusraw is the ‘founder of Tarana’

During the era of Shahjahan, there was huge expansion in the extent of the myths. Abdul Hamid Lahori (died 1659 AD) has said in ‘Akbarnama’ that although the most popular vocalists had Prabandh as the basis of all other forms of vocal art including Geet, Chhand, Dhruv and Stuti but these complex and rare Prabandhs were popular in the language of Karanataka. Hence Amir Khusrau (who belonged to the Hazari race and was the disciple of Sheikh Nizamuddin Chishti) sang these in the following four forms (Kism).

The first form (Kism) is called ‘Koul’ which was similar and dependent on ‘Geet’ in the Arabic-Persian verses and phrases based on Ek Taal, Teen Taal, Chaar Taal etc.

The second form (Kism) is Persian in which the Persian Ashaar have been based on the Taranas dependent on Ek Taal.

The third form (Kism) is called Tarana in which Ashaar is not present and its foundation has been laid on Ek Taal.

The fourth form (Kism) was made in Hindi language which was made popular by the name Khayaal.

According to Shreepad Bandopadhyaya

Amir Khusrau being a stranger could not follow the difficult and high-flown Sanskrit language of the Hindus, left the words from the song and added some meaningless words instead such as Ta, Na, Rita, Nom, Diri, etc. and added to it some technical words borrowed from the musical instruments Sitar and Tabla and introduced a new style of Hindustani music which is known now a days as Tarana.

According to Ustad Amir Khan

Amir Khusrau is the creator of Tarana. He has been researching on Tarana for years now. He was made the fellow on this by Bihar Sangeet Natya Parishad in January 1958. He claims that it is wrong to say that the Tarana doesn't carry meaning. The words used in Tarana carry meaning. It uses words derived from Persian and Arabic as shown below:

फारसी शब्द

नादिर दानी - नादिर जानने वाला है
तोदानी - तू जानता है
तन दर दानी - तन के अंदर का जानने वाला
दरा - अंदर आ
तन्नदरा - तन के अंदर आ
तोम - मैं तेरा हूँ

अरबी शब्द

यला - याअल्लाह
यही - अली का संक्षिप्त रूप
यलल्ले - खुश होना (Sankar)

During a discussion on Gayan of Swargeey Ustad Amir Khan, 29 June 1974 during All India

Music Program, Acharya Brahspati said that Ustad Amir Khan used to recite Tarana of the

Khayal style which means that he used to extend the Tarana in the style of Khayal and used

to use Taans as well in it. He used to say that “ओ दानी, दुनानी means ‘he knows, and so do you’. ‘अला, अली, अललूम’ are the words denoting God. In this way, Amir

Khusrau turned the Bol of Instrumental-music into the vocal forms and this is how the Tarana was created. This was what Ustad Amir Khan believed.

Noted singer and researcher in music, **Dr. Prabha Atre's** perception related to the tune is quite similar to the above belief of Amir Khan Saheb, which is known from his article: -

There was a very fine musician and music lover and researcher named Amir Khusro of the thirteenth century who presented five types of singing of Bhaktiras like Kaul, Kalbana, Naksh, Gul & Tarana to the music fraternity. In the course of time, except the tarana, everything else disappeared and the form of the tarana also changed. Tarana initially was born out of meaningful words, later artists who were unable to understand the true meaning of these words made this style of singing meaningless by mispronouncing the words.(Atre 29)

In the April 1976 issue of ‘Sangeet Kala Vihar’, there is an essay by Dr. Sunila Mishra which further claims Hazrat Amir Khusrau to be the inventor of Tarana style of singing. It is also believed that Hazrat Amir Khusrau is the inventor of Sitar therefore it may be a possibility that the Bol of sitar are also having presence in the Tarana style of singing. Da Ra Dir De etc and Ta Na, Taa, Krandha, Dhumakit Bol are the priceless assets of the word formations of Tarana.

According to Saifuddin Fakeerullah - Raag Darpan (1663)

Hazrat Amir Khusrau has given birth to tarana gayaki and has shared the rich legacy of Indian music to the upcoming generations.

Tansen, who was the court musician of Emperor Akbar, had written an entire Dhruv Pad in the praise of Hazrat Amir Khusrau and established him as a hero. The Dhruv Pad is something like this:

तानसेन के तुम भू नायक खुसरो
करत स्तुति गणु गायो रे (Panchal 24)

Rashid Ahmad Sahib says that "Amir Khusro used to write 'ashaar' (plural of Poetry) of various bands/ Genres of music, these bands include kaul, ghazal, tarana, naksh, nasheed and basit.(Khan 304)

Hazrat Amir Khusrau (1253-1325 AD) was a popular poet and composer whose name is still held with great respect in the world of music. Hazrat Amir Khusro is also known as the founder of Dilli Gharana. “During the reign of Sultan Allauddin Khilji in the 13th century,



when he had a debate with Gopal Nayak, a musician from the South”, (Sharma) Amir Khusrau prepared 12 Qawwal Bacche to answer them. The eldest qawwal child was Samat bin Ibrahim. After the death of Hazrat Amir Khusrau, this tradition came to be known as the Gharana of Qawwal Bachee. Amir Khusro throughout his journey lived in Delhi, then after his death, this Gharana became famous as Delhi Gharana after about 600 to 700 years. During this musical debate, Amir Khusrau invented new musical genres in Hindustani Shatriye Sangeet. (Siddiqi) Historian Abul Fazl, in his Persian book *Ai-ne-Akhbari*, has called Hazrat Amir Khusrau a mujid/ creator of the Tarana genre. (Garg 562) Amir Khusrau's bandishes/ compositions are sung in almost all the musical gharanas of India. Among them, Tarana singing holds a prominent place. All the gharanas have a deep connection with each other and the effect of each other's singing is clearly visible. At present, the reins of Dilli Gharana are held by the family of late Ustad Iqbal Ahmed Khan and Ustad Tanveer Ahmed Khan. His family has included the names of Ustad Imran Ahmed Khan, Farid Hasan Niazi, Mehboob Hussain etc in the current khayal singers. Many Shahgirds of the existing Delhi gharana are also from other families who are bringing laurels to this gharana in different corners of the world. Tarana singing has a special significance in the Delhi gharana.

Considering all the facts mentioned above, it can be easily claimed that there are a lot of beliefs associated with the origin and development of Tarana but if we just keep it all aside for a minute and attempt to trace the starting phase of Tarana, there can be no denying that Hazrat Amir Khusrau is the first name which pops up in the literature on the basis of the musical compositions which have been a part of the rich legacy of Dilli Gharana for more than 850 years. All the Tarana which have been composed by Amir Khusrau, they had the use of Persian words. Tarana style of singing too had two parts like the Khayal style of singing i.e. Sthaayi (स्थायी) and Antara (अंतरा). According to the compositions of Hazrat Amir Khusrau, (Khan 88) there are mainly three types of Tarana that have been propagated by the rich legacy of Dilli Gharana:

- ❖ The first type of tarana is the one that only consists of the words of a Tarana. (Tana Tom)
- ❖ The second type of tarana whose creation is attributed to Hazrat Amir Khusrau includes the composition in which the sthayi includes the standard bols of a tarana that are TA NA NA TA

NA RI and, in the antra, special sort of poetry is used.

- ❖ The third type of tarana is the one in which the sthayi has been composed with the standard bols of a tarana but the antra is composed with the bols of percussion instruments (Dha Kit Dha, Krandha Dha etc) and it is known as Trivat.

Here are some of the examples of the above-mentioned categories of Tarana that have been composed by Hazrat Amir Khusrau and other stalwarts of Dilli Gharana which have been carried forward to the next upcoming enthusiasts and torch bearers of Dilli parampara: -

राग - गौड़ मल्हार (तीन ताल)

स्थायी

ता ना ना दिर दिर दानी तोम ता ना ता दानी
दोस्त दीन त ना ना ना ना ना दीम ता ना ना ना ना

अंतरा

बरक चश्मे रिन्द तरसे कोह सेहरा
मी रसद, साकिया बरखेज सागर कुन के बरा मी रसद (Khan 89)

राग - हंसध्वनि (तीनताल)

स्थायी

दारा दीम तदरे, दानी, दीम् दीम् दानी दानी
ताना दीम नादिर दानी, दीम दीम तदरे दीम

अन्तरा

ता ना ना ता ना ना दीम नादिर दानी, तुम दिर दानी
दीम दारा दीम दारा, दीम दानी दीम दीम (Mishra 282)

राग - रागेश्री (तीनताल)

स्थायी

ता ना ना ता ना ना दानी, तुम दिर दानी, तोम् दिर दानी
देरे ना देरे ना दीम, दानी दानी ना दिर दानी

अन्तरा

दीम दीम तदरे दानी तुम दिर दानी तुम दिर दानी
दिर दिर तदरे दानी, दानी दीम तदरे दानी
धा कितक धुम कित तक, कत्त कड़ान, धा कड़नधा
(Mishra, Khan 241)

राग - गुर्जरी तोड़ी (एक ताल)

स्थायी

एते लाले दीम तानाना तोम
अन्तरा

तानाना, धा किट तक, धुम किट तक धित ता
तदारे दानी तादानी
एते लाले दीम तानाना तोम (Khan)

Conclusion

In conclusion, the multifaceted pearl of Indian artistic culture, Tarana, has held an enchanting allure for listeners and music enthusiasts for nearly 850 years. However, the origin and development of the Tarana style remain subjects of ongoing debate and inquiry, representing a significant research gap in the field. Upon careful examination, it becomes evident that Hazrat Amir Khusrau and his rich tradition have made invaluable contributions to this distinctive singing style. While elements of Tarana literature have been present in Indian culture to some extent, it is Hazrat Amir Khusrau of Dilli Gharana who deserves the credit for crystallizing the complete structure of Tarana and bringing it to the masses. His compositions were not only well-received but also embraced with great affection by the entire music community. Moreover, it is noteworthy that the legacy of Hazrat Amir Khusrau's Parampara gave birth to various forms of Tarana. This tradition not only diversified the Tarana style but also bequeathed this beautiful and wondrous invention to future generations, contributing significantly to the vast ocean of Indian Classical Music.

In essence, Hazrat Amir Khusrau's profound influence on the development of Tarana cannot be overstated. His legacy has left an indelible mark on the world of Indian classical music, expanding its horizons and enriching its repertoire. The journey of Tarana, spanning centuries, has been shaped and propelled by the brilliance of Hazrat Amir Khusrau and the enduring tradition he cultivated, leaving a legacy that continues to captivate and inspire music aficionados and scholars alike.

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