

CONTRIBUTION OF SITAR BAAJ IN BISHNUPUR GHARANA

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Abstract

As the Bishnupur gharana is coming from the Dhrupad tradition, so the playing style which is called 'Baaj' depends on some plucking bols for the right hand and long meend for the left hand like Dhrupad (in the time of 'nom - tom alap). Bishnupur Gharana has a very large numbers of Artists and Disciples. A large number of compositions is created by artists of this Gharana. The specialty of Bishnupur Gharana sitar baaj is to "play with long meend and little bit of ghamak in the time of playing Alap and Jod Jhala" and "Rhythmic variations of Boltan and different kind of difficult layakari, are the characteristic of this Gharana".

Keywords: Sitar Baaj, Bishnupur Gharana, Sitar, Classical Music.

INTRODUCTION

India is a country of diversities, many languages, castes live in India, That's why every region of India has its own language, lifestyle and culture. India is a beautiful mixture of diversities. The culture of India is also thousands of years old and music has always been an integral part of this culture. Music is the identity of Indian culture.

The advent of music is also considered from the very beginning of the creation. In present time, the ancient proof of music are believed to be in the Vedas. A detailed description has been given on the subject of music in the Vedas. Samveda is regarded as the source of Indian music. Although the complete history of India is not fully available, we do get example pre-Vedic music from Haroppa and Mahenjadarо civilizations. As a result all the veena, venu, mridanga etc. musical instruments and female dancing figures are found, proving that music was vogue at that time. However, we can identify the Samveda as the source of Indian music. Many scholars of music were born in India who took care of and carried forward the precious heritage of Indian music. Music faced many ups and downs from ancient time to modern times. Till the medieval period, education of music and other genres was given only in Gurukul, in which the teacher used to imbibe to the education by staying in the shelter of the Guru for many years (minimum 20 to 25 years). With the Mughal era, gharanas came in music. Many genres of music like singing, playing, dancing trio. House come into existence.

The word 'Gharana' is not Bengali in origin, although it is used in language. The Bengali dictionary gives its meaning as, belonging to or relating to a family or high family. In the vernacular, the words 'bangsha' (Khandan), family, lineage, posterity and 'bangsha parampara' a regular line of descent or heredity are used. Both Hindu and Muslim refer to their family tradition with the word 'bangsha'. 'Gharana' basically means 'house' and it

means the house of the teacher. It was the very old credence of the Guru – Shishya Parampara. Music gharana are also called genre.

According to the late Bimala Kanta Roy Choudhury, (Sitarist and musicologist), the word ‘ghar’ or ‘house’ means bangsha means bangsha parampara. This last word is a conjunction of guni+bangsha+parampara which means the regular line of descent or succession of a family having sound skill or knowledge in some pursuit, especially an artistic one. Those ‘parampara’ or school have their fundamental in generation mode of training in music. Every gharana has its own individual features. The features of playing tabla and sitar is also known as “Baaj”.

BAAJ

The word ‘**Baaj**’ means strike or hit or beaten or sounded or rung (as a musical instrument, bell, coin, etc.) the sound of playing on a musical instrument in a special process. To an instrumentalist (sitarist or sarodist) ‘baaj’ refers to the technique used in performance. ‘Baaj’ is a particular manner in which the instrument is hit or struck. ‘Baaj’ indicates the specific holding position of the instrument, right hand plectoral patterns (bols), and left hand fingering system used in the presentation of raag music on the Sitar or Sarod.

IMPLIMENTATION OF BAAJ IN BISHNUPUR GHARANA

Bishnupur Gharana possibly spelt Vishnupur Gharana, which is derived from the God Lord Vishnu. It is a feature of singing that follows the Dhrupad custom of Hindustani classical Music. Gharanadar training (talim) of classical music was first started as Bishnupur Gharana in West Bengal.

Through out the lineage this Gharana had made a remarkable impration in the mind of the player and the listeners. Vishnupur Gharana or Bishnupur Gharana has since long made its presence felt and left an unforgettable mark. It has its own identity, which is made different and unique from the other Gharanas.

As the Bishnupur gharana is coming from the Dhrupad tradition, so the playing style which is called ‘Baaj’ depends on some plucking bols for the right hand and long meend for the left hand like Dhrupad (in the time of ‘nom - tom alap).

Right hand bols are mainly executed in the time of **Jod** alap and in the time of playing **bol taans** with **Gat**. Simultaneously the left hand plays an important role in the time of playing **Meend** and **Gamak** in **Jod** alap.

While under Mughal rule, Bishnupur Kings paid a form of tribute and maintained an almost independent status. It is said that in the first half of the eighteenth century King Raghunath (2nd) appointed Bahadur Sen (khan) (Came from the Sangeet Samrat Taan Sen tradition), the Senia musician from Delhi, as chief court musician and thereby introduced classical music to

Bishnupur. Gadadhar Chakraborty, the first disciple of Bahadur Sen (khan), is thought to have founded Bishnupur Gharana. This popular history is countered by Shri Gadadhar Chakraborty who claims that the Bishnupur tradition came into being due to the influence of Gwalior Gharana, rather than Senia Gharana. According to Shri Gadadhar Chakraborty a renowned musician of Agara or Mathura Gharana, at the request of the Raja, stayed in Bishnupur where he gave training (talim) Ram Shankar Bhattacharya, who taught Shri Kshetra Mohan Goswami, Shri Jadu Bhatta and Shri Anantalal Bannerjee. Kshetra Mohan gave instruction to Raja Sourendra Mohan Tagore of Calcutta. He states that it is Anantalal Bannerjee who actually founded Bishnupur Gharana and that two of his sons, Ram Prasanna and Gopeswar Bannerjee, became the principal gharanadars.

Shri Ram Prasanna Bannerjee (from - 1870 to 1928), the eldest son of Anantalal Bannerjee, learned music from an early age from his father. He learned sitar from Raja Shri Jotindra Mohan Tagore, surbahar from Shri Nilmadhab Chakraborty and tappa from Shri Gopal Chandra Chakraborty. He also studied under the prominent surbahar player Ustad Sajjad Mohammad. Ram Prasanna was employed by Raja Narendra Nath Khan Bahadur of Narajol(Narasol) where he remained until the time of the Raja's death. He then returned to Bishnupur to open the Anant Sangeet Vidhyalaya, a music college. Ramprasanna taught many students, including Sri Atul Krishna Banerjee and Pandit Gokul Nag (Sitarist). His son Manilal Nag is a renowned exponent of Bishnupur sitar 'baaj'. Another student of Pandit Gokul Nag, Soumitra Lahiri, Peter Row (music teacher in Boston).

Bishnupur Gharana has a very large numbers of Artists and Disciples. A large number of compositions is created by artists of this Gharana. The specialty of Bishnupur Gharana sitar baaj is to "play with long meend and little bit of ghamak in the time of playing Alap and Jod Jhala" and "Rhythmic variations of Boltan and different kind of difficult layakari, are the characteristic of this Gharana".

MUSIC EXPONENTS TO ENLARGE THE "BAAJ" OF BISHNUPUR GHARANA

BAHADUR SEN

Bahadur Sen (khan) (descendent of the Sangeet Samrat Taan Sen) was not only a vocalist but could also efficiently play on such instruments as the Veena, the Rabab and the Sursringar. Among the disciples of Bahadur Sen (khan), the name of Gadadhar Chakravorty is noteworthy.

GADADHAR CHAKRAVORTY

Gadadhar Chakravorty was the first student who is considered the founder of the Bishnupur Gharana. Shri Gadadhar Chakravorty learnt from Bahadur Sen, not only the vocal but also those instruments like the Veena, the Rabab and the Sursringer. Among his worthy disciple was the talent known as Ramshankar Bhattacharya(court musician of Bishnupur Rajas) who

is responsible for the development of the Bishnupur Gharana. Among his disciple, Shri Jadunath Bhattacharya was also known as Jadu Bhatta, whose name spread through out India.

JADU BHATTA (JADUNATH BHATTACHARYA)

Jadu Bhatta was a genius of Indian Classical Music (Dhrupad Music of Bishnupur Gharana). He came from a musical family. Jadu Bhatta was born in the year of 1840. He spent his early days at Kadakuri village near Bishnupur (Bankura, West Bengal). His father Madhusudan Bhattacharya was a well known classical singer as well as instrumentalist. At his early days Jadu Bhatta learnt Sitar and Mridanga from his father. He went to Shri Ramshankar Bhattacharya and Shri Ganganarayan Chottopadhyay (Court musician of Bishnupur Rajas) to learn Dhrupad form of classical music, which is Bengal's indigenous contribution to Hindustani raag sangeet. Most of the exponents of Bishnupur learned **Dhrupad song** and **Instrumental music** simultaneously. Bishnupur was at that time the cultural capital of India. Jadu Bhatta stunned everyone by his talent when he was asked to sing and Ganganarayan took him under his wings. Gradually, He was trained in the **Khandarbani gharana** (Gwalior) of Dhrupad singing. The young Jadu Bhatta started teaching Bankim Chandra and would visit him at his Naihati Kanthalpara home. It was here that he even set the tune to Bankim's **Bande Mataram**. Later, he was employed in the Adi Brambha Samaj. In Brambha Smaj, after listening Jadu Bhatta, Maharshi Debendranath was so impressed and appointed him as a music teacher at the Jorasanko Thakur Bari.

ANANTALAL BANDHAPADHYAY AND HIS EMINENT SON

Shri Anantalal Bandhapadhyay of Bishnupur was an illustrious musician, who took his training from Shri Ramshankar Bhattacharya in both vocal and instrumental music.

Anantalal's sons, Shri Ramprasanna Bandhapadhyay, Shri Gopeswar Bandhapadhyay and Shri Surendranath Bandhapadhyay, were prodigies of this Gharana. Ram Prasanna Bandhapadhyay, the elder son of Anantalal Bandhapadhyay was versatile genius. He was well versed on the playing of the Veena, the Surbahar and the Sitar. He learned to play Sitar like his father from the Raja Jitendra Mohan Tagore (Disciple of Shri Nilmadhab Chakraborty) and the Surbahar from Neelmadhav Chakravorty and Sajjad Mahammad, and Tappa from Gopal Chandra Chakravorty.

Shri Ramprasanna Bandhapadhyay also received his training from Sajjad Muhammed, Son of Gulam Muhammed. Sajjad Muhammed was then staying at Jorasanko Rajbari of Raja Sourendra Mohan Tagore of Calcutta. During that time Shri Nilmadhab Chakraborty, the grandson of Gadadhar Chakraborty was teaching Raja jitendra Mohan Tagore. Ustad Alauddin Khan of Maihar took his lessons in Surbahar from Shri Nilmadhab Chakraborty.

Shri Gopeswar Bandhapadhyay was a great pioneer of the music of Bishnupur. He was the court musician of the Maharaja of Burdwan, Narajol and Mayurbhanj. He wrote number of books on musicology such as the **Sangeet Chandrika, Geet-Darpan, Geet-Praveshika and**

Sangeet Lahari. Shri K. C. Dey (Krishna Chandra Dey), the uncle of Manna Dey, the popular light music singer of Bengal, also learned Dhrupad from Shri Gopeswar Bandhapadhyay.

Shri Surendranath Bandhapadhyay, the third son of Shri Anantalal Bandhapadhyay a was very famous Dhrupad singer. He could also play the Banjo, the Pakhabaj, the Sitar and the Surbahar. He received the ‘Padmashree’ award during his life time.

Shri Radhika Prosad Goswami, disciple of Shri Anantalal Banerjee, earned great fame as a Dhrupad singer. Sangeetacharya Shri Tarapada Chakraborty, Shri Jamini Ganguli, Sri Sailen Banerjee and many others learned from Shri Girijashankar Chakravorty.

Kshetramohan Goswami, another maestro in this area, was a disciple of Ramshankar Bhattacharya. It was he who invented the ‘Dandamatrik’ system of notation in Bengal.

SHRI GANENDRA PROSAD GOSWAMI

A renowned exponent of the Bishnupur Gharana, he was known for the Khyal, Dhrupad, Thumri and Tappa, along with Raga-pradhan songs. Shri Ganendra Prosad Goswami, the nephew of Shri Radhika Prosad Goswami was a very famous musician. He recorded many songs for the Gramophone Company of India. Ganendra's journey to the world of Indian Classical Music was initiated at his home under the guidance of his father Shri Bipin Chandra Goswami, who was a noted Vocalist and Esraj player. His grandfather Jagat Chand Goswami was the famous percussionist of Pakhabaj. His next guru was his uncle, Pandit Radhika Prosad Goswami, a great vocalist of his times. He also got his training from eminent vocalists such as Pandit Girija Shankar Chakrabarty and Ustad Fayaz Khan . When he first started singing in Bengali as recorded, he did proceed with an “A-a-a-a”. Later on he started with “Ri-Te-Na, Ri-Te-Na” (syllables) in three – four songs, by the influence of Ustad Fayaz Khan.

In the end part of the eighteenth century and towards the **beginning** and mid-nineteenth century, when music of different ‘Gharanas’ were gradually assimilating around the **Khyal style**, the **Dhrupad style** continued flourishing among the musicians of Bishnupur.

Late Pandit Satyakinkar Bandyopadhyay was well known among the music lovers of Calcutta. Besides vocal music, he was adept in Surbahar and Sitar.

Late Pandit Gokul Nag took his talim (training) from Shri Ramprasanna Bandyopadhyay and also received his training from Ustad Sajjad Muhammed, son of Ustad Gulam Muhammed. He could play all kinds of instruments, like **Veena, Surbahar, Esraj, Sitar, Sarod, Tabla, Tabla taranga, Harmonium, Jaltaranga, Naltaranga** (Made of iron pipe), **Kastha taranga** (made from wood).

Now the leading exponent Pandit Manilal Nag (Padma Shri), his daughter Smt. Mita Nag and Pandit Soumitra Lahiri (An 'A' Top sitarist of AIR) are now representing the Bishnupur 'Sitar Gharana'. almost in its twilight days, bearing just a few glimpses from its age-old tradition.

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