

A JOURNEY TOWARDS EXPLORING CLASSICAL MUSICIANS OF UNDIVIDED DHARWAD DISTRICT OF KARNATAKA

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Abstract

Music is more powerful art that can create strong waves in the mind of every human being who listen to it properly. So, music has been treated as one of the better tools of creativity. Indian classical music is not only entertaining, but it has the capacity to cure a number of diseases like high blood pressure, diabetes mellitus and heart diseases as reported by researchers. Dharwad was under the Bombay Province and included in the Bombay State after India got independence in 1947. Kannada speaking districts like Dharwad, Belgum, Bijapur and North Canara were included in Mysore after the reorganizing of States in 1956. Later in 1972 the Mysore State was renamed as Karnataka. Contribution of old Dharwad District in arts, music, literature, etc. is remarkable and it has produced many intellectuals. Afterwards it was divided into Dharwad, Haveri and Gadag in 1997. Dharwad is well known for Karnataka University (1949), Akashwani Dharwad (1957), University of Agricultural Sciences (1986) and Dharwad Pedha with adding poets, musicians, dramatists, scholars, academicians etc to its glory. The icons who have marked their names for exceptional contribution in the field of Indian Classical Music of undivided Dharwad District include Shavai Gandhrva, Pandit Bheemsen Joshi, Panchaxari Ghavai, Maliikarjun Mansoor, Gangu Bhai Hangal, Dr. Puttaraj Ghavai and Basavraj Rajguru. They had sung the Gharanas (themes) like Kirana, Gwalior, Jaipur and Carnatic music (South Indian Classic music). Our study prevails around exploring renowned contributors of Indian Classical Music of undivided Dharwad District and reporting their music styles, achievements, awards and exceptional capabilities in order to salute their dedication.

Key Words: Dharwad District, Indian Classical Music (Hindustani Music), Gharana

INTRODUCTION

“Music is the freest, the most abstract, the least fettered of all the arts: no story content, no pictorial representation, no regularity of meter, no strict limitation of frame need hamper the intuitive functioning of the imaginative mind” (Copland, 1952). Music has its own tendency to attract audience by voice with the support of musical instruments and adequate composition. North Indian Classical music (NICM), or Hindustani music, is an ancient musical form of India that emerged from a cultural synthesis of the Vedic chant tradition and traditional Persian music (Kaufmann, 1965). Compositions or styles in Hindustani music include Dhrupad, Khayal, Thumri, Ghazal and Tappa. After the fall of Mughal Empire in 16th century the system of Gharanas started that was based on performances of music in a location represented as a particular house or style.

Based on the relevant locations the names like Gwalior Gharana, Jaipur Gharana, Lucknow Gharana etc. were introduced for music styles. Indian Classical Music have two unique characters that are ragas based on Sa, Re, Ga, Ma Pa, Dha Ni that are set of swaras (melodic frameworks) and talas that are used in composition in selecting the theme that is repeated

often after some lines as per the required arrangements. Sitar, sarod, sarangi, shehnai, tabla and tambura are the common musical instruments that are used to support the Hindustani music.

1. **Ganyogi Panchaxari Gawai** is well known name in the undivided Dharwad District both for music and social service of blind children. His name was Gadigeyya born on 2 February 1892 in Kadashettihalli of Hangal Taluk which is now in Haveri District. He was an exceptional talented artist with singing and playing many musical instruments like tabla, harmonium, sitar etc. inspite of being blind. A boy who was born blind had a great interest in music and to establish himself the struggle was not the easiest. Hangal Kumarswamiji who established Akhil Bharata Veershiwa Maha Sabha to unite the subcastes of the Lingyath Dharma was the first person to show the interest to train him in music. Gadigeyya and his elder brother learnt music in Shiralakoppa for eight years under a guru and later he lost his brother due to a health issue. Afterwards he went to Mysore with the help of Kumarswamiji to learn South Indian Classical Music under Vidwan Venkataramanayya. Now he was well versed in Carnatic Music, but was keen to learn North Indian Classical Music especially the Kirana Garhana.

Abdul Wahid Khan one of the renowned names of Kirana Gharana came to Shivyog mandir based in Bagalkot District on the request of Kumarswamiji to teach music from Lahore. From 1917-1921 Gadigeyya was trained and later he had contacted many sangeeth gurus to teach him other music styles. Finally, the music school started in Shivyog Mandir where he was a teacher and later, he moved to Gadag. As per the wish of Kumarswamiji he started Veereshwara Punyashraam in Gadag. Kumarswamyji named him as Panchaxari Gawai and his journey in developing music and training blind children like him became his passion. His album of Hindustani Music was also released by His Master's Voice (HMV) Bombay for exceptional talent. Being blind Panchaxari Gawai was well versed in singing many Gharanas, Bhajans and other styles of music.

He received many honours like Ubhaya Gaayana Vishaarada, Sangeet Ratna, Sangeet Samrath and Ganyogi were popular among them. In the Kannada movi "Ganyogi Panchaxari Gawai" a scene explains that when Panchaxari Gawai was performing in Dharwad for the song "Gumand Gumand Barse Badra" rain started with thunders and lightening. Today also Veershaar Punyashraam has its own contribution towards music lovers and especially caring the blind children and orphans who are discriminated by the society.

His successor was Pandit Puttraj Gawai who was believed to be his own elder brother died in the early age by Panchaxari Gawai. Ganyogi Panchaxri Gawai Sangeeth Mohatsava is organized in the memory of Panchaxari Gawai to pay him tribute from decades at Veereshwar Punyashraam in Gadag every year.

2. **Pandit Mallikarjun Bheemraayappa Mansur** was born on 31st December 1910 in Mannur village that is 5 kilometers from Dharwad. At the age of nine he performed in the theater of Yakshghana that was arranged by his father to encourage the blooming talent. Appaya Swami a Carnatic music artist picked him and trained well in classical music. Further Nikanth Bua Alurmath of Gwalior Gharana trained him for Hindustani Music and finally Alladihya Khan and his sons trained him who were renowned for Jaipur-Atrauli Gharana around 1955. Mansur was recognised for his talent in Hindustani Music and soon became popular all over India for many aparchit (unknown) ragas establishing them in his own style. He worked for Air India and other radio stations.

He also served as the music director for HMV Bombay. He received Padmashri (1970), Padma Bushan (1976) and Padma Vibushana (1992) with many honours and rewards to his contribution towards music. He was also awarded fellowship of Sangeeth Nataka academy in 1982 and Honourable Doctorate by Karnataka University Dharwad. He was also awarded Kalidasa Sanman by the Madhya Pradesh Government for his exceptional talent of music. He was the man behind to introduce music and fine arts as a subject in the Karnataka University Dharwad.

3. **Savai Ghandhrva**, whose real name was Ramchandra Kundgolkar Saunshi born in Kundgol which is a taluk place now in Dharwad District on September 12, 1952. His parents wanted him to complete education and settle with a good job in life. But his interest in art and music didn't match their desire. Often, he went to Hubli to watch dramas (Natak) and music programmes to establish himself as an artist. He was a great fan of Abdul Karim Khan who was known as the father of Kirana Gharana and tried to sing in that tone. Once Abdul Karim Khan caught him when he was imitating and collected his details from the host who arranged the programme. After persuasion Ustad came to know that the boy was having a great interest in classical music and asked him to follow for learning classical music. Learning only three ragas of Kirana Gharana in eight years he returned to his native.

Then Ramachandra started small music performances in order to build his career in music. After that Ramchandra Kundgolkar established his name in the Marathi Stage in the year 1907 by performing male and female roles in dramas. The name "Savai Ghandhrva" was titled because he acted in the female characters so professionally that the audience believed that a woman literally came from Gandharva Loka (land of celestial musicians in Indian Mythology) to play such a role. He popularised Kirana Gharana and his contribution to music made him popular all over India. Savai Ghandhrva provided music education to many aspirants and great names included Pandit Bheemsen Joshi, Gangu Bhai Hangal, Pandit Basavraj Rajguru and Pandit Feroze Dastur.

Every year Savai Ghandhrava Festival of music is organized in Pune in the memory of the great contributor, where artists perform classical music from all over India since 1953. It was

initiated by late Pandit Bheemsen Joshi and later it was named as Savai Ghandharva Bheemsen Mohatsava in honour of both great contributors of the same field.

4. **Gangu Bhai Hangal** is one of the renowned names in performance of Bhajan, Tumri and Khayal of Hindustani Music. She was well versed in Kirana Gharana that she studied under her Guru Savai Ghandhrva. When women were not encouraged for learning music for public performances, she was a revolutionary to attain such a great honour. She was born on 13 March 1913 in Dharwad. Later she joined her elementary education in Hubli and settled for lifetime after her marriage with the spouse. She gave many radio programmes and was invited for music concerts and served as Honourary Professor of Music for the Karnataka University Dharwad.

She was married to Gururaj Kauli a Lawyer at the age of 16 and had three children. She received Padma Bushan (1971) and Padma Vibhushan (2002) and other awards like Sangeeth Natak Academy fellowship are to be highlighted. Honourable Doctorate from Karnataka State Open University in 2008 for contributing her life for Indian Classical Music. Karnataka State Dr. Gangubhai Hangal Music and Performing Arts University has been introduced by the Karnataka State Government that came into existence in 2009 near Mysore under Karnataka State University Act 2009 as a tribute for her music contribution.

5. **Pandit Puttaraj Gawai** was successor to Veereshwar Punyashram after the demise of Ganyogi Panchaxari Gawai. He was an exceptional talent being blind and had contributed in the fields of art, music, drama and academics. He was a singer of Hindustani Music, played a number of musical instruments, author of books in Sanskrit, Kannada and Hindi to his credit and God for orphanage and blind children. He was born in Devagiri now it is in Haveri District, previously undivided Dharwad District in 3march 1914. He joined as a disciple of Kumarswmiji and Panchaxari Gawai who arranged training for Hindustani Music.

Following Panchaxri Gawai he joined Veereshwar Punyashraam and started a drama company named as “Kumareshwar Krupa Nataka Sangha” to support the ashraam financially. His role is greater in developing the Veereshwar Punyashrama that provides free accommodation for education to orphans as well as blind male children. He was provided honourable doctorate and many awards for his scholarly contributions including Padma Bhushana (2010). Once the Rotary Club International invited him to New York for a programme and Panditji denied saying that he cannot disturb his trikaal (three times) puja that requires water of well and patri (leaves for puja).

6. **Pandit Bheemsen Joshi** was born at Ron on February 4, 1922 which was under the Bombay Province and now it is a taluk place in the Gadag District formerly linked to Dharwad. Panditji is a well-versed name in India for Hindustani Music and his fanbase is strong in Mumbai Karnataka Region that includes few Districts of Karnataka and Maharashtra recognized under old Bombay Province. He had sung bhajans that are more

popular in many languages like Marathi, Kannada and Hindi belonging to rich literature of Dasa Sahitya and Hindu Gods. Panditji was also the composer and singer of “Mila Sur Tera Mera” that was one of integrity songs of many Indian languages, broadcasted on Delhi Door darshan which was popular among the 90’s. Once in an interview he explained that sometimes he practiced for 16hrs in a day and the style was unique adopted by his own dedication to music.

In the early childhood he was so much interested in the music that he followed music bands and lost himself at the early age of seven in the different places of the village. The villagers recognised him and left him home, but finally his father started writing on his shirts that the child belonged to Master Joshi for the safe return. Panditji’s interest took him to Pune and then North India ending his adventurous journey returning to his native place after learning harmonium and music. For many years he stayed at Kundgol where Savai Ghandharva was his teacher for learning Kirana Gharana.

Panditji established himself in 1941 by performing in a live music session, afterwards in 1942, HMV music company released an album of his songs. In 1943 Panditji joined the Mumbai Radio Station that helped him to shape his career in music. Now the journey of music accompanied him with live concerts of Hindustani Music, Film Songs in Marathi, Kannada and Hindi with his unique style that influenced people like Begum Akhtar, Smt. Kesarbhai Kelkar and Ustad Amir Khan. Bagyada Laxmi Baramma was composed by him that is devotional work of Shri Purandar Dasa and marked as one of the finest contributions to Kannada Bhajans.

That was also picturized on Ananth Nag the versatile actor of Kannada Film Industry for the movie Nodi Swami Navuirodhu Hege in the early 80’s. Pandit Bheemsen Joshi had two marriages and eight children with whom he settled at Nagpur and afterwards in Pune where he spent his major part of life there only. Awards of Pandit Bheemsen Joshi include Padma Shree (1972), Padma Bhushana (1985), Padma Vibhishana (1999), Bharath Ratna (2008) and many States like Maharashtra, Karnataka and Kerla have honoured him with their prestigious awards for his contribution to Hindustani Music.

CONCLUSION

Even though trends of music has changed but still the Hindustani music has its own significance in India as well as abroad. Singing Hindustani Music is not easy and many singers face critical health issues related to vocal health. It also represents our culture and protecting it is one of the duties in the patriotic sense. Listening Hindustani music helps not only entertainment but also supports as a treatment for many health issues. The journey in exploring contributors of Hindustani music of undivided Dharwad District ends with saluting the great contributors who still live in many hearts.

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