

A STUDY OF GURMAT SANGEET TRADITION

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Abstract: India holds a unique place in the whole world due to its culture, civilization and philosophy. Our philosophy also makes us the leader of the whole world. Various religious traditions were formed in India at different times. These religious traditions guide human life on the right path by giving their message. Similarly, a new tradition was born in the middle ages which we called Sikhism who made the mixture of bani with music which leads to kirtan tradition. Kirtan was sung as the means to reach the Supreme Father, the Supreme Soul. This unique tradition is known as Gurmat Sangeet tradition. Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji sowed its seeds. Guru ji along with Bhai Mardana ji blowed a wave of kirtan and gave the message of peace and religion to the whole world. The basis of which later became Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji the holy scripture of Sikhism. Sri Guru Granth Sahib ji has a complete system that is musicology of Gurmat Sangeet. In which we see the ragas on bani, its creator's name like Mohalla etc .we also see the different singing styles like Classical singing style pade, chaupade etc and folk singing styles like Allahniya, Ghoriya, Chhand, Vaar, Mundhawniya etc. Apart from this, the special use of the Partaal singing style is found in Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji. The entire text of Sri Guru Granth Sahib ji is well planned in which Ank, Rahao, Mohalla, Jati etc varans are seen and its unique Kirtan tradition, which is called Kirtan Chonkis are following in this tradition. After this, different types of Seasonal, Desi, Sanatani and Mishrat Raga have also used. Not only this, what type of instruments is to be used in Kirtan have also mentioned. We will get its complete description in the presented research paper. Through this research paper, the description of the complete Gurmat Sangeet tradition will be presented.

Key Words:- Gurmat Sangeet, Guruji, Mohalla, Ank, Raga, Singing Style, Chonki, Gurmat, Sangeet

Music is one of the magnificent gifts of God to mankind. Music is omnipresent and it is somehow connected to a person from his birth. Anything and everything in a human life begins and ends up in music or in other words it can be said that each and every part of a human's life is connected with the music whether it is spirituality, sadness, grief, happiness and life events like marriage, death, birth etc. India is a country famous for its heritage cultural ethics and religious ethics in the world. Whether we talk about religious traditions or we talk about music traditions and education, undoubtedly India has acquired a prominent place in the world for these. That's why we honors it with the title of 'Jagat Guru' that means 'The World's Teacher'. All the credit for this renowned position of India goes to our country's great Saints and their teachings. From time to time various saints, jatis, religions took birth on this land and gave us this great cultural heritage that we are having today. The main goal of all these saints, jatis and religions was the worship of God. For this purpose all of them had adopted different paths and tried various ways. Coming to Medieval period, if we talk about various traditions of that era we will come to know about Sikh tradition that is one of the great traditions of that time. The founder of Sikh tradition is great Saint, philosopher, musician, leader, creator, writer Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji who is the first guru of Sikh religion. The completion of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji is a great miracle in the history of India.

SRI GURU GRANTH SAHIB JI

Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji is the religious scripture of Sikhism as well as eleventh guru of sikh religion. In total there are eleven Sikh gurus and among them Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji is the first guru and Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji is the eleventh guru. Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji is not only a holy book for sikhs but it is much more to them. In fact Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji is the living guru of Sikhs. Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji is comprised of 1430 angas (pages) containing the Bani (hymns spoken by the Guru) of Sikh gurus. The bani of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji has the status of guru.

“Bani Guru Guru Hai Bani, Vich Bani Amrit Saarey”¹

Kirtan Chaonkies- The tradition of kirtan chaonkies has started from the time of Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji and till now it is followed by the Sikh people. Kirtan Chaonkies tradition is clearly Meaning: The word, the bani is guru, and guru is bani. Within the bani, the ambrosial nectar is contained.

“Guru Bani Kahe Sevak Jan Maane, Pratakh Guru Nistaare”²

Meaning: If his humble servant believes, and acts according to the words of the guru’s bani, then the guru, in person emancipates him. While taking an interview of Bhai Randhir Singh- He said. “Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji is the eleventh everlasting guru of Sikhs. There are total 1430 ang or pages of holy Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji.”³

The tenth guru Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji gave the Guruship to Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji on 20 October, 1708 at Nanded, Maharashtra and said “Agyaa Bhai Akaal kiTabe Chalayo Panth, Sabh Sikhan Ko Hukam Hai Guru Maanyo Granth” It means under the order of the immortal being, the panth was created. All the Sikhs are enjoined to accept the granth as their guru. “Before passing away, Guru Gobind Singh Ji decided that the Sikhs have to regard Guru Granth Sahib as their next and everlasting guru. Guru ji said :

‘Sabh Sikhan Ko Hukam Hai Guru Maanyo Granth’⁴

Guru sahibans from Guru Nanak Dev Ji to tenth Guru Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji have not only given us the holy scripture Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji but on the basis of musical signs and sangeetak prabands guru sahibans have also given us this sacred granth with the layers of music for the nourishment of the soul. Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji has a unique form of music which is different from other musical traditions of the world. In this tradition the hymns are taught to be sung in Raga and this is what we call Shabad Kirtan or Gurmat Sangeet. Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji not only covers the hymns of Guru Sahibans but also covers the hymns, devotional messages and teachings of the great saints, fakirs and sadhus. Holy Sri Guru granth Sahib Ji covers the banis of 36 maestros among which there are 6 Gurus, 15 Bhagats, 11 Bhattas and 4 Guru Sikhs. In reality if we observe deeply then we will come to know that Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji is not only the religious book for Sikhs but it is much more because in this sacred ocean of divinity there are so many offshoots of the saints from different religions and different religious traditions just like there are so many copulates of Sufi saints like Baba Sheikh Farid, similarly a treasure of Saint Naam Dev’s hymns are also present in Guru Granth Sahib Ji who further was the follower of Vitthal (Lord Vishnu), also there are maximum spiritual hymns and devotional instructions of Saint Kabir Das as well as the hymns of Saint Surdas the lover of Lord Krishna are also present. So it shows that this sacred granth is for the whole humanity and universe. Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji covers the classical music, folk music and literature aspects as well. So all this has resulted in the unique and unified tradition of Shabad kirtan that comes under Gurmat Sangeet started by Guru Nanak Dev Ji which is not seen anywhere in any other granths.

MEANING OF GURMAT

“The word ‘Gurmat’ is made up of two words ‘Gur’ and ‘Mat’. The meaning of Gur is Guru (preacher or teacher) and Mat means sermons or teachings or Principles. So, Gurmat means the principles and rules made by the guru”⁵. It simple means a spiritual travel on the path showed by Guru is Gurmat.

MEANING OF GURMAT SANGEET

As we have mentioned previously the meaning of Gurmat so similarly the meaning of gurmat sangeet is music sung or played with rules or principles created and mentioned by Sikh Guru Sahibans. This devotional music tradition is the one of the finest and unique blend of musical elements and spiritual hymns. When such elements and organs are jointly disciplined through bani and published in their functional form, the doctrinal basis of Gurmat Sangeet is easily revealed.

SALIENT FEATURES OF SRI GURU GRANTH SAHIB JI

1.Raga: Raga is the main element of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji after hymns. The whole bani (hymns) of holy Sri Guru granth Sahib Ji has been classified into 31 main ragas (Mukh Ragas) and 31 different ragas (Prakar Ragas). The mukh ragas or main ragas are those ragas in which there is no shadow of other raga is seen and prakar ragas are those ragas which are made us with the combination of two ragas. Guru sahibas have used both types of ragas in Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji.

In Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji 31 main ragas are used as the title of every shabad (hymns). “Ragas are the important part of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji. In total there are 62 Ragas including 31 mukh and 31 Prakar ragas”⁶

The names of Main Ragas (Mukh Ragas):

1. Sri Raag	16. Raga Bilawal
2. Raga Maajh	17. Raga Gond
3. Raga Gauri	18. Raga Raamkali
4. Raga Aasa	19. Raga Nat Narayan
5. Raga Gujri	20. Raga Mali Gaura
6. Raga Devgandhaaree	21. Raga Maru
7. Raga Bihagara	22. Raga Tukhari
8. Raga Wadhans	23. Raga Kedara
9. Raga Sorath	24. Raga Bhairo
10. Raga Bairari	25. Raga Basant
11. Raga Dhanaashree	26. Raga Sarang
12. Raga Jaitshree	27. Raga Malaar
13. Raga Todi	28. Raga Kanada
14. Raga Tilang	29. Raga Kalyaan
15. Raga Suhi	30. Raga Prabhatee
	31. Raga Jaijaawantee

2. PRAKAR RAGAS

In Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji along with 31 main ragas there are 31 prakar ragas that are used for singing the hymns.

The name of Prakar ragas are as follows:

1. Raga Gauri Goareri	18. Raga Suhi Kafi
2. Raga Gauri Dhakani	19. Raga Suhi Lalit
3. Raga Gauri Cheeti	20. Raga Bilawal Dakhni
4. Raga Gauri Beragan	21. Raga Bilawal Gond
5. Raga Gauri Deepki	22. Raga Bilawal Mangal
6. Raga Gauri PurbhiDeepki	23. Raga Ramkali Dakhni
7. Raga Gauri Purbi	24. Raga Nat
8. Raga Gauri Majh	25. Raga Maru Kafi
9. Raga Gauri Maalwa	26. Raga Maru Dakhni
10. Raga Gauri Mala	27. Raga Basant Hindol
11. Raga Gauri Sorathi	28. Raga Kalyan Bhopali
12. Raga AsaKafi	29. Raga Prabhati Vibhas
13. Raga Asawari	30. Raga Bibhas Prabhati
14. Raga Asawari Sudhang	31. Raga Prabhati Dhakhani
15. Raga Devgandhari	
16. Raga Vadhans Dakhni	
17. Raga Tilang Kafi	

If we will try to classify the ragas of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji so we will see that so many types of the ragas are used in Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji by Guru Jis which show their deep knowledge and sense of ragas.

3. SOUTH INDIAN RAGAS

In the treasure of ragas present in Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, there are six such ragas which Guru Nanak Dev ji have used for conveying spiritual messages to the specific area of South India those are known as Dhakani Ragas. The name of Dhakhani Ragas are given as follows :-

- Gauri Dakhnee
- Vadhans Dakhnee
- Bilawal Dakhnee
- Ramkali Dakhnee
- Maru Dakhnee
- Prabhati Dakhnee

“Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji also covers the South Indian Ragas. There are 6 South Indian ragas.”⁷

It shows the vast and neutral thinking of Guru Ji that he was not biased to use the particular tune of particular area. The theme was just to inculcate the spiritual knowledge to ever one. Every hymn is entitled with a raga that means that particular hymn should be sung in that raga. For example,

“Jaijivanti Mahala 9

Beet jehe Beet Jehe Janam Akaaj Re”⁸

As given above “Beet jehe Beet Jehe Janam Akaaj Re” hymn should be sung in Raga Jaijivanti. So ragas have an important place in Sri Guru Granth sahib Ji. The importance of ragas has been stated in Guru Granth Sahib Ji as,

“Dhan Su Raag Surangarrae alapat Sab Thik Jaee”⁹

It means blessed are those beautiful ragas which, when chanted, quench all thirst.

4. DESI RAGAS OR RAGAS RELATED TO PLACES

Sikh Guru Sahibans have also used Desi Ragas for their bani in Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji. For the purpose of conveying their messages Guruji’s have used some Desi Ragas so that people can easily connect with bani and understand the meaning and message of bani clearly. Ragas like Majh which is belonged to the Majha area of Punjab, Sorath is raga of Sorashtrya, Asa raga is belonged to Pak Patam are few examples of Desi Ragas.

5. SEASONAL RAGAS

Many of the ragas among main and different ragas are associated with different seasons which are also called Ritu Kaleen Ragas. Ragas are related to different seasons like winter, summer, rain, autumn and spring. Guru Sahibans have specially included two ragas in the ragas related to seasons that are Raga Malhar and Raga Basant. Malhar has relation with rainy season and Basant raga has relation with autumn season.

“Raag Basant and Malhar are explained in book “Guru Nanak Sangeet Paditi Granth’ by Bhai Sukhwant Singh”¹⁰

6. CLASSICAL SINGING STYLES

As mentioned above Ragas have an important place in Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji. So it is clear that classical singing styles are the part of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji. There is a provision to sing pads, Do padas, Chau padas, Ahstpada etc. with Dhrupad ang and also in khayal gayaki in Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji.

6.1 PARTAAL SINGING STYLE

Partaal singing style is one of the unique styles of Holy Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji which is not seen in any other tradition. The meaning of Partaal is that various lines of shabad should be sung in

different talas as with every stanza tala is changed. In other words Partaal means the use of different talas in one shabad. There are 54 Partaal shabads in Holy Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji.

“Partaal means there are different Talas for the parts of the Shabad. In other words, it means the parts of the Shabad should be sung in different Talas and tempo.”¹¹

7. FOLK SINGING STYLES

Along with classical singing style, Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji also covers the Folk singing style. We see the Ghoriya, Alahunian, Karhole in Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji which shows that Guru Sahibans were interested in music and it signifies their thinking about music that they had also used folk music for gurbani hymns.

7.1. Ghoriya- Ghoriya is a folk singing style in which hymnes are sung on marragies and other happy occasions.

7.2. Alahunian- Alahunian is a folk singing style sung on the death. While interviewing Prof. Ravel Singh- He said, “Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji not only covers the classical singing styles but also enfolds the folk singing styles.”¹²

8. MUSICAL SIGNS

8.1. Rahao- Litrary meaning of rahao is pause. Rahao plays an important role in shabad. The line of shabad ends with rahao has the central idea and this line is also taken as the main line or sathai while singing. Rahao can be one or more in a shabad. “In Rahao, the shabad has its central idea which is to get activated as a centripetal force in the presentation of the shabad.”¹³ An example of Rahao is as follows:

“Mile sukh naam har sobha chinta lahe hamari II 1 II rahao II”¹⁴

8.2. Mahalla- Mahalla present on the top of hymns is an important part of it. It represents the author of the hymn. In simple words it shows which Guru Sahiban wrote the hymn. An example of mahalla is given as follows:

“Basant Mahalla: 9

“Tin Basant Jo Har Gun Gaye II”¹⁵

On top of the above mahalla ninth is written. This shows that this hymn has written by ninth guru of Sikhs Sri Guru Teg Bahadur Ji. “The word "Mahalaa" at the top of the Shabad identifies which Guru is the author.”¹⁶

8.3. Ghar- The meaning of Ghar is home but the Ghar sign in Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji shows the tala in which shabad will be recited. Ghar is written on the top of the shabad. Example of Ghar is quoted as follows

“Asa M:4 chhant Ghar 4 II

Har amrit bhine lohena man prem ratna ram raje II”¹⁷

In above hymn ‘Ghar 4’ is written this shows the tala of hymn.

So we can also say that Guru Sahibans wrote the shabad in such a systematic order that on the top of the shabad we are able to know the raga and tala of a particular shabad in which it will be sung.

8.4. Ank- Meaning of ank is digit or number. Ank plays an important role in the bani (Hymns) of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji. Through ank we get to know the counting of pads in one shabad (hymn). These numbers help in arranging the shabad and provide sequential order to a shabad (hymn) and these also show the number of antras in a shabad.

“Various written speech of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji is divided by these anks (numbers) apart from rahao and other signs.”¹⁸

8.5. Jati- Similarly like Ghar, Jati is also written on the top of the shabad. Jati has a relation with the playing technique of tabla. In jati the bolas of right pura (right drum of tabla) are played with open hand and left dugi (left drum of table) are played with close hand and this process is called jati. An example of jati is quoted as follows.

“Bilawal M 1 Thiti Ghar 10 Jati Ek On kaar Sat Gur Prasad

Akam Akankaar Nirala II

Amar ajoni jaati na jala II”¹⁹

9. Kirtan Chaonkies- The tradition of kirtan chaonkies has started from the time of Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji and till now it is followed by the Sikh people. Kirtan Chaonkies tradition is clearly seen in the tradition of Sri Harmandir Sahib (Golden Temple) Amritsar, Punjab. There are 9 kirtan chaonkies in a day such as:

- 1. Tin Pehire di Chonki
- 2. Asa Di Vaar di Chonki
- 3. Bilawal di Chonki
- 4. Anand di Chonki
- 5. Charan Kamala di Chonki
- 6. Sodhar di Chonki
- 7. Aarti di Chonki
- 8. Kalyan di Chonki
- 9. Kaanrhaa or Kirtan sohile di chonki

10. KIRTAN INSTRUMENTS

Guru Sahibans have not only created the Gurmat Sangeet and practiced the tradition of Kirtan chaonkies but have also selected and invented new and different instruments for Gurmat sangeet. So we can say that the whole tradition is created by Sikh Guru Sahibans and it is very unique. String instruments used in Gurmat Sangeet are given as follows:-

- Rabab
- Saranda
- Israj
- Taus
- Dhad Sarangi

Wind instruments used in Gurmat Sangeet are as follows:-

- Harmonium

Percussion instruments used in Gurmat Sangeet are as follows:-

- Mirdang
- Tabla

“Playing on the Rabab by Bhai Mardana during Guru Nanak's time, Siranda during the times of Guru Amar Das and Guru Ram Das, Siranda and Israj during the period of Guru Arjan Dev, Taus and Dhad Sarangi for Vaar singing during the period of sixth Guru, Guru Hargobind Sahib, Mirdang during the ninth Guru's Guru Teg Bahadur Ji's time, Tanpura during Guru Gobind Singh's time, were particular instruments which explicitly proves the use of special musical instruments in Gurmat Sangeet.”²⁰

CONCLUSION

Our country is well known in the world for having diverse culture, religion and beliefs. It's a matter of pride to be a part of the most religiously and ethnically diverse nation. Indian philosophy revolves around the religion with the main objective of moksha to convey its messages to mankind so that people spend their life on right path. Sikh Guru Sahibans have created the Bani and have completed Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji in a systematic order in which the Gurbani Shabads are arranged under different ragas, in various folk singing styles, in Partaals and many more. All this is compiled as a Holy Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, 11th and everlasting Guru of Sikhs. All the singing process of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji is called Gurmat Sangeet. This tradition is unique and different from any other tradition.

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