



## **International Journal of Humanities & Social Science Studies (IJHSSS)**

*A Peer-Reviewed Bi-monthly Bi-lingual Research Journal*

ISSN: 2349-6959 (Online), ISSN: 2349-6711 (Print)

ISJN: A4372-3142 (Online) ISJN: A4372-3143 (Print)

Volume-X, Issue-IV, July 2024, Page No.146-152

Published by Scholar Publications, Karimganj, Assam, India, 788711

Website: <http://www.ijhsss.com>

DOI: 10.29032/ijhsss.v10.i4.2024.146-152

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### **Understanding and Assessment of Hindustani Classical Music: Constraints in Present Day Performances**

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#### **Abstract:**

*The tradition of Hindustani Classical Music is age-old. Different forms under this music evolved out of Indian Classical Music in due course time. Raga is the core of Indian Classical Music and the prevailing Cultural tradition as well. Various Classical and Semi-classical Forms of Hindustani Classical Music such as Dhrupad, Dhamar, Khyal, Tappa, Thummri, Tarana etc. had been exercised by the Court-musicians and the Gharana Maestros since from the medieval period in northern India. Gharana, an exclusive feature or system in Hindustani Classical Music, is meant for maintaining the standard and variety. The practice of the same has also meticulously been observed among the Performers and Practitioners belonging to specified Gharanas till the twentieth century. The overall standard as well as the versatility of such music is being found gradually deteriorated in spite of the foundation of numerous institutions under the Department of Higher Education across the country as well as consistent practice and performances among the learners both from institutional and private segments.*

*This paper intends to find the cause of the concurrent problem through proper analysis and the solution at the same time.*

**Keywords: Cultural tradition, Evolution of Indian Classical Music, Gharana, Hindustani Classical Music, Raga, Standard and Variety.**

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**Introduction:** Indian Classical Music implies an organized as well as supreme state of music. The term *Raga* is very significant in Indian Classical Music. Because it expresses proper mood with the help of exact rendition of structured *Swaras* (musical notes), articulation of sound, voice modulation and necessary embellishments. It is undoubtedly a unique discovery which took several years to exploration, dedication, experimentation and perfection as well. The history of Indian music is vast and intricate too. Detailed information about the evolution of this music is found since from the age of the *Vedas*. The origin of the *Swaras* and their gradual development irrespective of *Vedic* (*Marga* or Classical) and *Laukik* (*Deshi* or regional) *Swaras* occurred during this time. The practice of *Vedic* music became obsolete in the Classical period that begins at about 600—500 B.C.

**(Prajnanananda 44)**. An extensive research on the development of Indian music as well as *Ragas* and their classifications was initiated from this time.

The *Gandharvas*, the creators of the *Gaandharva Sangeet* or *Marga Sangeet*, are regarded to have set the idea of several musicological aspects. The *Gandharvas* like Narad Muni, Bharat Muni, Matanga Muni and many more of different ancient times emerged with exemplary contributions towards Indian Classical Music which have definitely established the perpetual foundation of the same. Musicological intricacies such as *Jati-raga*, *Gram-raga* etc. which were varied classification systems of ancient *Ragas* have continued the journey with various other systems through evolution. The history of Indian music, thus, has come across *Raga-ragini* system, *Mela-raga* system etc. during the medieval period and *Thaat-raga* system, *Raganga-raga* system etc. during the modern period.

Before the beginning of the Christian era, Indian music was divided into *Marga* and *Deshi* (**Prajnanananda 44**). *Marga* or *Gaandharva Sangeet* was bounded with certain rules of *Raga* (melody), *Taal* (beats), *Chhanda* (rhythm), *Dhatu* (tune), *Matu* (lyric), and *Geeti* (articulation). This music remained unchanged irrespective of regions. On the contrary, *Deshi Sangeet* expressed its regional trait and was devoid of excessiveness of musical elements like *Gaandharva Sangeet*. *Deshi Sangeet*, having modified with some musical elements of *Gaandharva Sangeet*, appeared as *Abhijaat Deshi Sangeet* and was named as *Prakirna* in Sanskrit or *Pakinnak* in native language. The *Prakirna* songs were further modified and the new form was called *Biprakirna*. Both *Prakirna* and *Biprakirna*, the two forms of *Abhijaat Deshi Sangeet*, were in vogue till the Christian era. *Gaandharva Sangeet* became obsolete just after the Christian era. *Biprakirna* songs were modified again and in course of time *Prabandha Sangeet* evolved. *Prabandha Sangeet* was basically of three types; namely *Suda*, *Alikrama* and *Biprakirna*. With the advancement and demand of time, many a classical musical styles were developed in different forms and shapes out of different *Prabandhas* irrespective of North India and South India (**Goswami Preface: 10**).

*Hindustani* Classical Music evolved from Indian Classical Music through various forms and styles in northern India which began to be developed as well as flourished during the period from 14<sup>th</sup> century A.D. to 18<sup>th</sup> century A.D. with the abolition or alteration of the *Prabandhas* (**Ghosh 26, 41**). Starting from the 16<sup>th</sup> century A.D. some popular derivative forms of the *Prabandhas* such as *Dhrupad*, *Dhamar*, *Khyal*, *Tappa*, *Thumri*, *Tarana* etc. among other forms developed during these periods. The other forms comprised *Dharu*, *Sadra*, *Vishnupada*, *Ragmala*, *Tribat*, *Chaturang*, *Pancharang*, *Haptarang*, *Quaul*, *Gulnaksh* and so many which have become faded or obsolete in course of time. The popular forms of *Hindustani* Classical Music, already been mentioned are still prevalent at this present age and the *Gharana* representatives are mostly recognized through the forms like *Dhrupad*, *Khyal*, *Tappa* and *Thumri* as per Vocal Music is concerned. *Dhrupad* and *Khyal* are considered to be the Classical Forms through which *Raga* may properly be expressed. *Tappa* and *Thumri* being the Semi-Classical Genres which were later on adopted by the Court-musicians as well as the *Gharana* representatives. These Forms or the Styles of

Singing got Royal patronage to a large extent and thus are rightly recognized as *Darbari Sangeet* (Court Music).

*Dhrupad* is assumed to have been reconstructed through modifications of the *Dhruvapat* or *Dhurpad* by the genius of Raja Man Singh Tomar (1486 A.D. – 1516 A.D.), the king of Gwalior along with his associate music connoisseurs at the last phase of fifteenth century A.D. (**Roy 79**). Raja Man did not stop himself only organizing the new musical style, but also founded an institution for the campaign of the same. Under his enlightened support *Dhrupad* found a creative environment for growth. Tansen sang of his glory and mentioned him as his patron. It was in this atmosphere of a benign and cultured ruler that the *Dhruvapat* blossomed (**Deva 100**). *Dhruvapat* evolved from *Dhruva Prabandha*, an offshoot of *Salag-Suda Prabandha*. *Prabandhas* were meant for Classical Compositions devoid of *Alaap* or *Vistar* (expansion and improvisation through musical notes); namely *Geet-Prabandha*, *Vadya-Prabandha* and *Nartan-Prabandha*. *Prabandhas* had been in use throughout India during the era till before the concept of Form Music was established. *Geet-Prabandha* (Vocal Composition) comprised *Deshi* (regional) *Raga* and *Taal*. These *Prabandhas*, devotional in nature, were mostly sung or performed in the temples. The composer of this music was called *Vaggeyakaar*. The music seemed to sound like *Dhrupad* without *Alaap*, *Bol-Baat* and other embellishments. This music was familiar as *Haveli Geet* during the medieval period in northern India (**Ghosh 22-25**).

*Khayal* was elevated to Court-music and gained its popularity from the reign of Shahjahan, the *Mughal* emperor (**Mitra Preface: 12**). The modern style of *Khayal*, alike the same of *Dhrupad*, flourished all over India from Gwalior. Shakkhar Khan, Makkhan Khan, the disciples of Ustad Ghulam Rasool and their descendants are accredited the propagators of that style and which was known as *Quawaal BaccheKi Gayaki* (**Mukhopadhyay 78**). In course of time, the term *Gharana* was introduced both in *Dhrupad* and *Khayal* styles among the Court-musicians. *Gharana* deals with professional performers and the forms of *Hindustani* Classical Music.

*Hindustani* Classical Music is exclusive for its inclusion of *Gharana* system which is missing in *Carnatic* (south-Indian) and other branches of north-Indian Classical Music. *Gharana* evolves from the Persian word *Ghar* which means family and it stands for music professionals under one family or certain school of music who follow definite style of singing, instrument playing or dance. *Gharana* talks about innovative styles in presentation, powerful improvisation and consistent variety of features, maintaining certain steps called *Silsila* (**Ghosh 99-100**). The fundamentals of all the *Gharanas* are same but differences occur due to the application of steps from one *Gharana* to the other. The trend of this system gradually crossed the barrier of the lineage which extended to a large number of competent followers from generation after generation (**Roy 3**).

*Gharana* system does not entertain a mere imitation; it survives through *Taleem* (expertises) and proper improvisations. A particular *Gharana* is truly recognized by the consistent flow of practice and performances among the renowned Artistes (Performers) of

at least consecutive three generations following the same tradition. Exponent/s of a particular *Gharana* may emerge with some innovative ideas which are adopted and practised by other representatives of the *Gharana* itself. Innovative ideas standardize the quality of *Gharana* Music to a higher degree and give birth to a *Gaayaki* (exclusive style) in course of time. A recognized *Gharana*, thus, flourishes with its exclusive characteristics. *Gharana* is usually named after a person or a place or a family. There are a number of renowned *Gharanas* such as *Gwalior Gharana*, *Agra Gharana*, *Kirana Gharana*, *Patiyala Gharana* and others, named according to different places. *Alladiya Gharana* is named after Ustad Alladiya Khan. Again *Seni* or *Senia Gharana*, *Quawaal Bacche Gharana* etc. are ideal examples, named after the families of Miyan Tansen and the *Quawaals* respectively.

**Cultural tradition:** The tradition of *Acharya* (*Guru* or trainer) and *Shishya* (disciple) is very old in India. These saintly *Acharyas* believed in plain-living and high-thinking. The impact of their noble ideas enriched Indian music and culture. Ancient culture and education of this land were nurtured by these *Rishis* (saints). They spent their life in the *Ashrama* (hermitage). Their abodes were the seats of perfect learning and mental edification. The process of learning was completely residential. *Shruti* and *Smriti* which refer to listening and memorizing were two basic tools for ancient learning. The disciples, therefore, were to memorize all the lessons by listening from their *Guru*. Though, the *Acharyas* were blessed with six rare qualities which have been referred to Bharat Muni's *Natyashashtra* (**Ghosh 94**). The qualities as described in the text signify *Jnan* (theoretical knowledge), *Vijnan* (special knowledge for accomplishment), *Karan* (habitual skills), *Vachan* (ability to quote from memory), *Prayog-Siddhi* (skill to practical application about regional music and drama) and *Nishpadan* (ability to generate a number of eligible disciples according to merit). The learning process through *Gurukul* (residential) system was thus transmitted from the *Acharya* (*Guru*) to the *Shishya* (disciple) and *Guru-Shishya Parampara* or *Acharya-Shishya Parampara* continued for centuries till before the abolition of the same. Royal patronage enabled the *Acharyas* to carry on the *Acharya-Shishya Parampara* independently. The *Acharyas* rendered free services to the society as their moral duty instead of professionalism. Hankering after money and wealth were immaterial to them. They used to put down their innovations and experiences on various subjects along with Music through manuscripts. Practical performances and scientific analysis on Music happened in the temples. Logical discussions were encouraged very cautiously in the *Parampara*. Many inferences, thus, were taken by the *Acharyas* unanimously in the presence of the King and which of those got included as theories of Music. Theories of the ancient Indian Music, as expounded by the musicologists (*Acharyas*), had maximum resemblances and minimal controversies in most of the cases (**Ghosh 94**).

The *Gayak-Vadak-Nartak Parampara* (performers of vocal music, instrumental music & dance) was in vogue simultaneously with the *Acharya-Shishya Parampara*. They were entertainers and professional performers. They adopted the music, being performed and taught in the temple under *Acharya-Shishya Parampara*, through imitation. They had access to the Royal Courts and the public domain throughout. Till 15<sup>th</sup> century A.D. the music of

India may be categorized as Temple-music, led by the *Acharyas*; *Deshi* music, entertained by the Royal families and Folk music for general people. The age of the Sultanate (1192 A.D. – 1526 A.D.) and the age of the *Mughals* (1526 A.D. – 1757 A.D.) as considered the medieval period in Indian history experienced the abundance of Court-music in northern India with the gradual abolition of the *Acharya-Shishya Parampara*. The *Khyal* singers, during the reign of Alauddin Khilji the *Sultan* (1296 A.D. – 1316 A.D.), were called the *Quawaal* while the *Dhrupad* performers, during the reign of Akbar the *Mughal* emperor (1556 A.D. – 1606 A.D.), were known as *Kalavant*. Both the *Quawaals* and the *Kalavants* had social prestige as told by Muhammad Karam Imam in his book *Muadan-UI-Musiki*. At the waning stage of the *Acharya-Shishya Parampara*, Some of the *Acharyas* of northern India managed to shift to southern India and started to modify and uplift the *Deshi* music therein. The *Gayak-Vadak-Nartak Parampara* got the privilege to raise their positions as Court-musicians in course of time. The term *Gharana* started to be used at the last phase of eighteenth century A.D. though the seed of the same was latent a long before (**Ghosh 94-99**).

*Gharana* talks about the evolution of social and cultural attitudes among the professional music practitioners. In fact, professionalism was gradually prioritized rather than old traditional values in the *Acharya-Shishya Parampara*. In old tradition, theory and practice were equally important and complementary to each other. In the music of the medieval period, theoretical as well as analytical thoughts began to lose its glory day by day and the place of practice rapidly started rising up with the advent of the *Gharana* concept. Starting from the last phase of nineteenth century a great consciousness arose among a few numbers of Educationists cum Scholars which brought about changes in the Social and Cultural affairs. Institutional training in Music began to be assumed during the first phase of twentieth century. Pandit Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande and Pandit Vishnu Digambar Paluskar are remembered with great regard in the field of *Hindustani* classical music. These two personalities had utmost contribution for the propagation of the basics of *Hindustani* Classical Music among the common people. They took initiatives for the dissemination of the same by setting arrangements of Seminars as well as Concerts through renowned Maestros and Experts. The role of these Contributors for setting up Institutions in traditional music is well-known today. Many other contributors have also left their noble marks for the development of *Hindustani* Classical Music in several directions which must have analytically as well as practically developed our power of thinking. The basics of *Hindustani* Classical Music are taught as a curriculum in many institutions especially in North India. Many research and scholarly ideas are being exercised in the institutions across India.

**Critical Analysis:** India holds a very rich Cultural heritage. *Raga*, a prevailing Cultural Tradition, undoubtedly enriches both the *Hindustani* and *Carnatic* styles of music. *Hindustani* Classical Music, however, encourages two musicological terms namely, *Nayaki* and *Gayaki*. *Nayaki* refers to the lessons that a disciple learns from his *Guru* during apprenticeship. After having learnt a great deal of lessons the disciple acquires that much of

potentiality to adopt ideas beyond his *Gharana*. He then, has got some power to blend ideas with self-experience and which is called *Gayaki*. Various representations of the same *Raga*, according to *Gharana*, may be possible due to change the number of musical notes or change of *Thaats* (structure wherefrom melody is obtained) or otherwise. So, one should not ignore *Gharana* training; but at the same time, it is to be kept in mind that perfect blending of ideas, obtained from different *Gharana* Maestros will definitely boost up the dynamic character of *Raga* presentation.

*Meend, Shruti, Gamak* etc. are some essential components to evidently justify *Ragas* through proper usages of the same. Ancient *Geetis* such as *Suddha, Bhinna* etc. which deeply associated with the *Vaan* or *Vaani* such as *Gaurhaar, Daagar* etc. were used in *Dhrupad* of the medieval period. *Ragdari*, the term deeply associated with *Alaap*, unfolds a *Raga* either through gradual expansion of notes in *Dhrupad* or proper usage of Phrases (combination of particular notes, applicable in the same *Raga*). Four kinds of *Varnas* namely *Shayee, Arohi, Avrohi* and *Sanchari* along with ten essentials of *Dhwani* (sound), as explained by Bharat Muni, play vital role to produce a *Raga* meticulously. Ten essentials comprise *Graha* (starting note), *Angsha* (essential note), *Taar* (upper note), *Mandra* (lower note), *Nyas* (prolonged note), *Apanyas* (note, standing for a while), *Alpatva* (note of nominal usage), *Bahutva* (note of frequently used), *Shadav* (usage of six notes) and *Aurdav* (usage of five notes). Various terminologies, apart from those already mentioned, a Performer should be aware of through which a *Raga* appears to the listeners with its exact character.

Nowadays, the practice of *Hindustani* Classical Music has definitely increased among the youngsters. But at the same time, the contemplation of *Raga, Ragdari*, various forms as well as styles is decreasing. As a result, passion in music is found missing. Inappropriate vocalism, absence of exact embellishments, actually required for the *Raga* and meaningless as well as excessive jugglery of musical notes results into the performance mechanical and emotionless. All these stand in the way to the appreciation and excellence of *Hindustani* Classical Music.

**Conclusion:** There is no keen difference between a Song and a *Raga*. The purpose of both the music is expression of proper feeling. In case of a Song proper feeling is expressed with perfect rendition of Lyric, Tune and Rhythm. In the presentation of a *Raga*, the lyrical portion is replaced with *Pakad* or Phrases (combination of certain notes) and proper feeling may be obtained with the perfect blending of the melodic structure, definite articulation and Rhythm. *Alaap* covers a vital portion to expose a *Raga* which may rightly be executed either in the form of *Dhrupad* or that of *Khyal*. The renowned performers of all times might have excelled with certain limbs of the Classical Forms but a Learner of *Hindustani* Classical Music irrespective of Institutions as well as Traditions should be aware of all the *Angas* (components) such as *Behlawa, Badhat, Bol-bat, Bol-taan* etc. and should also be capable of performing the same instead. A wise learner must know the Theoretical and Practical portions both. They are supposed to be the preservers of the Cultural Heritage keeping up all the Forms and Styles intact. Performers, Musicologists, Researchers, Critics,

and Appreciators will come up out of the present generation who will definitely cherish and save our Culture.

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