

Thumri Singing in Kolkata: A New Dimension of Stylization And Application

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Abstract- Kolkata has own tradition in Music field. Principally Thumri came from Benaras, Lucknow and the other part of the country, called as Purab ang, After then Punjab and Thumari has come. But Kolakata accepted both of the styles and they have been synchronized into one.

Index Terms- Thumri, Kathak, Tappa etc.

I. INTRODUCTION

Thumri is an aesthetically rich musical form, enveloped with both classical & folk tunes. The very name Thumri reveals close affinity with dance because thumak (thum) means a dance step, and thumak also suggest a small stature. It is known as 'Thumakat Chal'. In every such steps, ghungroos tied to the ankles make musical sounds. The letter 'ri' of Thumri is supposed to be from 'Rijhana' which means 'to' please. Therefore thumri means graceful step by step movement which pleases a viewer. Actually during the medieval period light classical forms of music were used for the purpose of pleasing the royal patrons. These types of music were accompanied by dance form became associated with light classical form of singing. Over the years these songs began to develop independently. That's why traditionally ever Thumri singer expressed the emotional content of lyric and their own feeling through facial expressions and movement of the hands.

Till the start of the 19th century, though Thumri was sung in royal durbars, it was not considered to be an elevated class of entertainment. It was usually performed by professional female singers, for a long time never got open patronage accorded to the higher forms singing like Dhrupad, Dhamar and Khayal, forms. Probably it was elevated at 18th century on the royal court of Wajid Ali Shah (1847-56) the nawab of Lucknow. He Staged dance-drams such as 'Rahas' and 'Indersahab, which made use of Thumri, hori, and elements of khathak dance, Sadiq Ali khan was the best male Thumri singer in Wajid Ali Shah's durbar.

In the British period at the time of Nawab Wajid Ali Shah's exile in Kolkata many female Tawaef had come with him. At that time Thumri came and spread into musical circle of Bengali society. At Ranagaht town of Bengal, a number of khayal singers joined in mehfil, organized in the house of Palchowdhuri and presented Thumri in light mood by the female Tawaef and the imitation of the song like as 'jab chod chali lakhnow nagri' written by Nawab of Lucknow. But male singers were not used to sing Thumri in dhima Tal like as madhyaman Ada with captivating voice and styles.

But from the beginning of 19th century (1912) It started with great granger in different places in Calcutta. Amongst the places the house of Mahraj Nator, the holy music place of Sangeet Guru Shyamlal Babuji, Sangeet- Samaj' of North Calcutta, yearly sessions of Murari Sammelan, Mehfiles Dulichand, and yearly assembly of Shankar festival. But Thumri came in front of all general people of this city through the 'All India Music Confrence. Thus in the 2nd flore of 101 Haryson road's house a number of music lover used to come regularly specially Shyamlal Chettri is the central attraction of this arrangement. It was the first step of spreading the semi-classical music like as Thurmi, Dadri, Hori, Kajri etc. along with the pure classical music.

Since from the beginning of this city there was a tradition of sastriya sangeet along with baiji dance and geet, thumri, gazal, nidhubabur tappa etc. in Bengal. Numbers of music patrons of Kolkata invited many baijis to their residence to present their beautiful performance from Bahubazar, Metiaburuj, and Chitpur occasionally. Peter Manuel mentioned in his book 'Thumri in historical and stylistic perspective that the primary source of Thumri genres in Indian music is courtesans. "The Natya Sastra itself specifies that female voices are preferred Bharata (1951:158), and throughout the following two millennia, the courtesans were primary sources of musical entertainment, especially in the semi-classical genres which evidently evolved into Thumri, "But this is not evolution, this is improvised form of Nadavati, an erotic song rendered in vibhasa gities, which is mentioned in Matanga's "Bhrhadhesi". In 17th and 18th centuries. Thumri was associated with Jangla, a popular melody mentioned in 'maraca-e-Delhi' written by Nawab Darga Quli Khan. He refers toa courtesans and a barbar as being expert singers of Jangla. The Persian word 'jangla' means ancle-bell which indicates that jungla is associated very much with dance music. So Kathak, Thumri, Jangla are correlated. Thumri is a synthesis of dramatic styles of a dance and ways of expression of a lyric (vao) in a musical form.

Thumri of kolakata was specially based from on purbia styles of both Lucknow and Banaras gharana. Later Punjabi gharana also brought a novelty with their toppa style. It was called as 'top-thumri'. Then mixing styles have been adopted in Kolkata. Bhaiaasaheb Ganapat Rao of Goalior gharana stayed a certain time at Calcutta. At Dumdum in seth Dulichand's house he lived in gave talim to many students and very often arranged conferences. The exponent vocalist Girija Shankar Chakarbotry of Murshidabad, the disciple of Radhika Prasad Goswami had taken talim from Bhaiaasaheb Ganapat Rao later. Gaoharjan, quine of semi-classical, such as Thumri, Gajal, etc also took talim from bhaia Ganapat Rao. The real name of Gauharjan is Elin Anjelina

Eward. Her mother's name is Edelin Victroia Hemings. In 1873 she was renamed as Bibi Malkajan. She is originally Armenian. She came from Banaras. She was called as badi Malka. She was a poetess too. Her book on poems entitled 'Diwan Makhjan-e-Ulfate-Malika' has been published from Ripon press in Kolkata. She wrote 106 gajals, 14 thumries, 3 Thumri Bhairavi, 6 songs of holi, 1 holi dadra, 1 Thumri Bahar and 2 Astai Darbar and Thumri Pirach. Kumar Debo Prasad garg's opinion is the mother of Gauharjan was Malkajan Goawali (B-S-p-67). There are other three Malkajans stayed in Kolkata named Agrawali Malkajan, Chulbulawali Malkajan, Bhagalpuri Malkajan. Amongst them Agrawali Malkajan was famous and she lived in Kolkata since from beginning. She was also a poetess.

Bhaia Ganapat Rao, Shyamlal Chettri Khalifa Badal Khan, Girija Shankar Chakarborty Maujuddin Khan saheb, Gauharjan enlightened Thumri and bring it in front of general people of Calcutta. Maujuddin Khan Saheb was highly talented inborn artist. He could present any hard styles of song, whichever he had heard once. Bhaia Ganapat Rao, Shyamlal Chetri was his teachers. Bashir Khan accompanied him in harmonium.

There are many gharana's culture mixed in Bengal through baiji culture. The exponent artist, of thumri, Nightingale of All India 'Gauharjan, took talim also from Bindadin of Lucknow. She took talim of kayal, Thumri from Ganapat Vaiya, Shivarparasad Misra of Kashi and Dhruapd talim from Sirjan Bai. Madhuri Bai of Benaras Gharana, Munnibai, Shanti Bai of Lucknow all Thumri artists lived in Kolkata and expanded their different styles of art. After independence, 'Kolkata Artist society' was formed in Calcutta. The president of this society was Bishen Chand Badal, the brother of Rai Chand Badal. We have got three Munnibai,s references from the sources (O.E.M Volume-2. Page 695). One is the pupil of Abdul Karim of Kirana gharana. The second one (late 19th century) who sang very often with her sister Hamidan Bai, is based on Calcutta. They were trained from his brother, Khuda Bakhsh. The sisters wrote lyric with the pen names 'Hizab' and 'Lajabant' for Munnibai and Naqab' for hamidan Bai. The third one, (mid 19th century) also based in Kolkata for some times. At Bengal Girija Sankar Chakarborty, the disciple of Ustad Dabir Khan, and Radhika Prasad Goswami of Bishnupur gharana took also the responsibility to expand thumri. Pandit Jnanprakash Ghosh Sukhendu Goswami Sudhirlal Chakarborty, Biresh Roy, Jamini Ganguly, Nayna Devi were his disciple. After Maujddin, Thumri was expanded vastly in Kolkata and Thumri of Bengal took a new dimension. His birth place was primarily at Patiala, Punjab, or Lahore. His father Gulam Hussian Khan was a vocalist and sitar Player. His mother Zebunissa Begum, too, was a singer. Maujuddin initially learned music from his parents. Later his family migrated to Benaras around 1894. He was called a 'Srutidhar'. Many eminent singers had come to perform at the Benaras Durbar; he could assimilate then and there by listening only once or twice. He received talim from Sadiq Ali Khan of Lucknow. Then he came to contact with Bhaia Banapat Rao and Shyamlal Chetri. He was deeply influenced by Jagdeep Misra. Sheth Dulichand patronized him in Calcutta. He remained in Kolkata for some years. He became very popular in Kolkata and came in close contact with many musicians including Badi Malka and her daughter Gauharjan. Jaddan Bai of Mumbai received talim from Gauharjan and specially from Maujuddin Khan Saheb, Ganapat Rao in Kolkata. She was the mother of noted film star

Nargis. She became famous as a Thumri artist in Kolkata. Akhtari bai, in her easily stage came for talking lesson to her. But she liked khayal angik thumri. Professor Zamiruddin Khan born in Ambala, Punjab was called as the King of Thumri in Kolkata. At his very early age he died at his residence of Kolkata. His contribution was also innumerable. His famous students were Kaji Najrul Islam, Abbasuddin, Angurbala, Indubala, Kamala Jharia and his only son Abdul Karim Khan. Another exponent of Khayal, thumri, bangle-gan, Veemadeb Chattopaddhaya was the disciple of Gouri Sankar Mishra, nagen Dutta, Badal Khan, lastly Fayz Khan. Indubala was trained in khayal, Thumri by Kaliprasad mishra.

Gouri Shankar Mishra was one of the thumri teachers at very beginning in Kolkata. At that time all reputed Baijis took their lessons of khayal, thumri, dadra, tap- khayal, hori, kajri, chaiti, laoni from Gouri Shankar. Originally he was one of the followers of the old Sarangi tradition in Kashi and one of the representatives of Kathak sampraday.

One of the exponents Thumri singer of Kolkata is Girija Devi, belonged in the seni and Benaras gharana teaches through S.R.A. in Kolkata. Amongst many disciples of her, Dalia Raut, of S.R.A has taken place in Thumri, Reba Muhuri, the daughter of Dr. Amiya Nath Sanyal was one of the exponent Thumri singer of Benaras gharana. She showed her experience in the performance in Satyajit Roy's film "Satranji ke khiladi". Many disciples of Kolkata have been got talim from Purnima Choudhar, of Benaras gharana.

Another two names of Thumri artist in Kolkata are very important. One is A.T. Kanan and the other one is D.T. Joshi of Maharashtra. They kept their many successors of this tradition.

In 1937 at Nikhil Banga Sangeet Conference Abdul Karim Khan enchanted all Bengali audiences with his rendering khayal in Mian Ki Todi, Ashabari, Shudhkalyan, Mulkaums and Thumri in Bhajravi, and two more thumries. Amongst the female eminent singers of Thumri of purab ang, Begam Akhtar was trained from many teachers of different gharanas, such as Abdual Wahid Khana (Kirana gharana), Ramjan Khana of Lucknow, and Barkat Ali of Patiala. Her later gurus, were successively, were imdad Khan (Sarangi), Gulam Mohammad Khan of gaya, and Ata Mohammad of Patiala. She was formerly known as Akhtaribai Faizabadi. In her thumries she mixed the Purab and Punjabi styles. Her disciple in Bengal are Rita Ganguly, Pravati Mukhopadhaya, Shipra a Bosu, Reba Muhuri and others. There are three main schools of Thumri prevailed in Bengal; (i) The Lucknow school, (ii) Benaras school, (iii) Punjab school Benaras. Thumri rarely uses mixed ragas, and inspires the emotions of serenity. It is full of khayal angik vistar and tan. Lucknow Thumri is lighter in comparison with Benaras Gharana, Tempo is quiker and usage of various alankaras, application of each notes with grace notes. The Punjab Thumri applies unusual and unexpected combination of notes. The main sentiment of Thumri is Shringer. The main theme of Thumri is erotic love and separation centric.

Everybody knows very well that ostad Bade Golam Ali Khan is the pioneer of Punjab gharana in Kolkata. His training was from his uncle Kale Khan (durbar musician in Kashmir) and his father Ali Bakhsh Kasurwale in Patiala tradition. So tappa elements influenced both his khayal and thumri. His thumris were embellished by highly skilled use of Punjabi khadda murkis and satta tans.

II. CONCLUSION

Bangla a Thumri was based on mainly Purab style. Purab means Benaras, Gaya, Patna, Bihar, U.P. Golam Ali used to sing usual Purab thumri. But due to creativity in application of angik and unexpected styles, some bodies think as Punjab Thumri, 'Pat likhun bheju' in Bhairavi is one of the instances. It brings a new dimension in Purab Thumri of Bengal. The followers of this tradition were all the students of Bade Golam Ali khan, named his son Munnawar Ali, Prasun Bandyopadhyaya, Mira Bandyopadhyaya, Sandhya Mukhopadhyaya, Tulsidas Sarma, and others. Pandit jnan Prakash Ghosh also was trained from Gulam Ali.

There are certain changes in Thumri from 18th century to 19th century in Kolkata. A new era came and a new dimension of stylization and application in Thumri singing came through the mixing of both ang, Purab and Punjab, Therefore, Kolkata is ready to accept every culture in full respect to improvise and develop its own culture.

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