



CONTRIBUTION OF DAGAR BROTHERS TOWARDS HINDUSTANI CLASSICAL MUSIC TRADITION.

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ABSTRACT:

The four propagated the Dhrupad form and nurtured the tradition started by Baba Gopal Das who founded the Dagar Bani. Gopal Das was a Brahmin who joined the court of Mohammed Shah Rangile in Delhi and converted to Islam. He changed his name to Baba Imam Khan Dagar. Of the four brothers, Moinuddin and Aminuddin always sang together and the younger set Zahiruddin and Faiyazuddin teamed as a pair Jugal bandi) during performances. They are the direct descendents of the senior Baba Imam Khan Dagar. In their concerts, they would sing the raga alap singly, and the bandish together. There was great vigour and vitality in their presentation since they had acquired the same training and knew each other's traits very well. Their father Nasiruddin Dagar was the court musician at Indore. The brothers were called Dagar Bandhu. They composed the Kalidas ballets Malati Madhav and Kumara Sambhava for Sri Ram Bharatiya Kala Kendra in Delhi. They were the first classical musicians to perform at international festivals at Venice and Paris in the 1960s. After the death of Moinuddin, Aminuddin set up a music school in his brother's name in Calcutta where free training in Dagar style of singing is given. Aminuddin has received the Padma Bhushan and his uncle Rahimuddin who is no more, received the Padma Bhushan earlier for his contribution to music. Many dhrupadiyas, both vocal and instrumental hailed from the extended Dagar family.

KEY WORDS:

Hindustani Music, Tabla, Taal, Raag, Dhrupad, Gharana.

Mohiuddin and Fariduddin are brilliant products of this family. Fariduddin was given the Tansen Sanman by the Madhya Pradesh Govt. Their style of singing is deeply classical and reveals awesome tonal control; with startling octave swings and pounding rhythms. Fariduddin Dagar is founder director of the Dhrupad Kendra at Bhopal. The three students who joined when it was inaugurated were Frenchman, an American and a French lady. They completed the six-year course and went back to their countries to demonstrate dhrupad singing. The Kendra takes only upto fifteen students a year. They live on campus and they are given vigorous training with voice culture for two hours at 5 a.m. followed by 8 hrs practice sessions. Once a week they are taught Samskrit and musicology from the ancient texts. The brothers Umakant and Ramakant Gundecha were trained in this institute. A few girls are also in this course, which proves that although it is a vigorous style, Dhrupad can be mastered by the ladies.

After the death of the two elder Dagar brothers, Faiyazuddin and Zahiruddin carried on the dhrupad tradition till 1989 when Faiyaz passed away. Zahir took as his singing partner Wasifuddin the son of his late brother Faiyazuddin. In 1994 Zahir died leaving his young nephew to keep up the Dagar tradition. Wasifuddin is the sole active member of this Bani. There is at present a revival of interest in this traditional musical form of dhrupad, which was supplemented by the khayal, and thumri in the last few decades of the mid 20th Century. Zahiruddin noted that music lovers who had migrated to the west initiated this revival of interest. The Dagar brothers did not change their style of singing to suit changing tastes. "Dhrupad is to us a form of worship because it started with the intonation of the sacred syllable Om", said the brothers. According to Zahiruddin the Dagar bani was the only style that did not owe any musical technique to Tansen as almost all other Banis did. He felt that the old system of royal patronage made music the exclusive monopoly of the rich and undertook the taste of propagating dhrupad among the general public. Dhrupad was the original form with well-founded techniques of breath control and voice manipulation and khayal singers practised dhrupad to train their voice in swara and laya. Zahir noted that the seminal book on dhrupad the Kitab-i-Navras was in Dakkani Hindi, which indicated that the dhrupad style of singing was prevalent in the south. This book is a compilation of Sultan Ibrahim Adil Shah I who ruled in Bijapur (Karnataka) in the late 16th A.D. Faiyazuddin was founder president of the Dhrupad Society in 1981, which imparts training in this style. It has branches in the West in Paris and New York.

Sharad Chandra Arolkar was born in Karachi in 1912 and although there was no interest in music within his family circle, he was drawn to the Gwalior style of khayal singing. He learnt from Eknath Pandit who was a vina player and brother of Shankar Rao Pandit. Arolkar's forte was tala and laya and his precision in keeping to the tala timing was remarkable. He collected many compositions in dhrupad, khayal, thumri and tappa. He also composed about 350 songs of his own. He listened to the recordings Rahmat Khan of the Gwalior style with great interest and concentration and assimilated many facets of Rahmat Khan's style in his singing. He used to play on the vina and felt that the Gwalior gayaki style was based on the gamakas of the vina. Classical music should be able to evoke the finer feelings in people and enrich them emotionally, intellectually and spiritually according

sound was the maestro's responsibility. The rried which is the gamaka that links one swara to another in a long sweep is for Arolkar the most important facet of classical singing. At Gwalior great musical personalities were encouraged to interact and develop their individual talents and this gave birth to Khayal singing and Arolkar feels that the ideas of classical music enshrined in the Sama Veda had a full flowering with the birth of the Khayal.

Ramakrishna Bua Vaze was a contemporary of Paluskar and Bhatkhande. He was born in a poor family but determined to pursue a music career although it was not an assured source of income. He travelled to Indore and then to Ujjain where he received training from Bande Ali Khan the renowned Vina player. He stayed in Gwalior for a while and then travelled all over North India and even went to Nepal where he was appointed court musician. He met Swami Vivekananda and acquired a large number of dohas (verses) from the spiritual master. When he returned to Poona to his family he had a reputation and a following. He trained Kesarbai Kerkar, Dinanath Mangeshkar and Vinayak Rao Patwardhan. His musical work Sangit Kala Prakash has compositions with notation and brief bio data of old masters.

Kesarbai Kerkar trained at first in the Gwalior style with Ramakrishna Vaze, then had intensive training in Jaipur style under Alladiya Khan. She had a voice with a 3-octave range, and great accuracy of swara. Her voice control could make her glide from the highest to the lowest octave smoothly. She had a powerful voice and disdained the use of the mike. She was born in Goa and started music under Abdul Karim Khan for a brief while before learning from Ramakrishna Vaze for three years. Later she made up her mind to learn from Alladiya Khan who was court musician at Kolhapur. The Raja and his chief musician were skeptical about her ability and dedication. Kesarbai persisted and was taken as a shagird (pupil) by Alladiya Khan on the condition that she would not perform in public except to accompany him till he died. Kesarbai respected this wish and abstained from public performance for 25 years. Alladiya Khan belonged to the Jaipur gharana of music. Kesarbai avoided publicity and cut some commercial discs after much persuasion by her followers. Kesarbai's music moved Rabindranath Tagore so much that he called her a born genius and not just a skilled musician who could manipulate technicalities of swara and raga. She was awarded the Padma Bhushan for her contribution to classical music.

Sawai Gandharva (1886) was the first pupil of Abdul Karim Khan. One of his favorite songs was "Piya Milan ki aas" in raga Jogiya, which was a masterpiece of his guru. He learnt music in Dharwar from Karim Khan when he was a teenager. At the age of sixteen his voice broke and the guru put him on a regular course of swara practice for seven years till Sawai's voice became mellow. Although, Sawai learnt the Kirana style he was open to the strong features of the Gwalior style. He was confident enough to act and sing in Marathi plays at a time when the renowned Bal Gandharva was a rage with the public with his raga-based stage songs. Rambhau Kundgolkar was the real name of Sawai Gandharva. Since he out shone Bal Gandharva he was called Sawai Gandharva which means 'better than Gandharva'. Bal Gandharva was sporting about it and applauded Sawai Gandharva's classical plus theatrical

Hirabai Badodekar was born in 1905 at Miraj in a musical family. Abdul Wahid Khan, the nephew of Abdul Karim Khan, taught Hirabai when she had just turned fifteen years old. She had intensive training under her guru who would not allow her to repeat any taan (fast phrase) during Alap. In her concerts she would sing vilambit and drut khayal in the raga, then follow it up with thumri and bhajan. She started a music school called Nutan Sangit Vidyalaya where she encouraged the girls to act on stage. She acted in the plays 'Sadhvi Mirabai' and 'Sangit Saubhadra' along with her brother, sister and well-known musicians like Sawai Gandharva and Bal Gandharva. Bal Gandharva acted as Arjuna and Hirabai did Subhadra. Hirabai went with Kesarbai Kerkar who introduced the amateur musician to the invitees at the All India Music Conference at Calcutta. Hirabai sang Vande Mataram from the Red Fort on the day India gained Independence in 1947. She was awarded the Padma Bhushan in 1970.

Roshanara Begum was a disciple of Abdul Karim Khan and had her training in Bombay. After 1947, she migrated to Pakistan. She had a very-mobile voice with a three-octave range and clarity in swara sthana. She could sing the Karnatak ragas Hamsadhwani and Abhogi as she could easily pick up tunes without being taught. She was born in Calcutta in a music loving family. She was able to follow all the nuances of Abdul Karim Khan's style of singing.

The great names in Thumri singing are Badi Motibai, Rasoolan Bai and Begum Akhtar. Lucknow is regarded as the 'Mother of thumris. During Wajid Ali Shah's time this semiclassical form gained public acclaim. Mujras (chamber music) and urdu poetry proliferated.

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