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“The Musical Heritage Of Dāgur And Betiā Dhrupad Gharānā In West Bengal : An Analytical Study”

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Abstract

This analytical study explores the musical heritage and historical development of the Dāgur and Betiā Dhrupad Gharānās in West Bengal. It clarifies the distinction between the terms ‘Dāgur’ and ‘Dagar’, tracing their etymological, social, and geographical differences. Drawing from authoritative genealogical records, the paper presents conflicting scholarly views on the origins and evolution of the Dāgur Gharānā, particularly highlighting arguments from music historians such as Dilip Kumar Mukherjee and Dr. Bimal Roy. The study details the stylistic features of the Dāgarvāni tradition, emphasizing its unique approach to ālāp through a refined system of melodic ornamentation and improvisation, as outlined by scholars and practitioners. The paper also provides a historical account of the Betiā Gharānā, rooted in the feudal legacy of northern Bihar, and documents several traditional Dhrupad compositions from both gharānās. Finally, the work examines the spread and influence of these gharānās in Bengal, chronicling the contributions of prominent musicians and the enduring appeal of their musical legacy among Bengali disciples. Through genealogies, stylistic analysis, and a survey of compositions, this study offers a comprehensive perspective on the significance and cultural impact of the Dāgur and Betiā Dhrupad Gharānās in the regional and broader Indian music traditions.

Key Words : Dhrupad , Dagar , Betia , Gharana.

Objective of the Study

The primary objective of this study is to systematically explore and analyse the rich musical heritage, historical development, and lasting influence of the Dāgur and Betiā Dhrupad Gharānās within West Bengal. The research aims to:

- Trace the genealogical roots and evolution of the Dāgur Gharānā, engaging with diverse scholarly perspectives and historical records.
- Investigate the stylistic characteristics of the Dāgarvāni tradition, particularly its unique approach to ālāp and methods of melodic ornamentation and improvisation.
- Document traditional compositions and the cultural context of the Betiā Gharānā, including its feudal origins and role in the musical landscape of Bengal.
- Analyze the dissemination and impact of these gharānās in Bengal, highlighting the contributions of prominent musicians and the enduring appeal among Bengali disciples.

Through a nuanced examination of genealogy, style, and repertoire, this study seeks to contribute to a deeper academic understanding of the Dāgur and Betiā Dhrupad Gharānās, illuminating their significance within both regional and broader Indian classical music traditions.

Methodology for Study

This study adopts a qualitative and historical research methodology to systematically explore the musical heritage, development, and influence of the Dāgur and Betiā Dhrupad Gharānās in West Bengal. The approach integrates multiple research tools and sources to ensure a comprehensive and nuanced analysis.

An extensive review of existing literature, including scholarly books, articles, dissertations, and archival materials, forms the foundation of this research. Key texts by musicologists such as Dilip Kumar Mukherjee, Dr. Bimal Roy, and Dr. Pradip Kumar Ghosh are critically examined to understand genealogical roots, stylistic evolution, and historical debates regarding the Dāgur and Betiā Dhrupad traditions. Comparative studies of gharānā structures, as well as regional and cultural dynamics, are also considered.

The study involves detailed musicological analysis of stylistic features, performance techniques, and repertoire specific to the Dāgarvāni and Betiā gharānās. This includes examination of compositional forms, ālāp improvisation, ornamentation methods, and textual content of traditional Dhrupad compositions. Notations, recordings, and interpretations by renowned artists are analyzed to identify distinguishing characteristics.

Primary data is collected through field visits to sites of historical and cultural significance in West Bengal and Bihar, including interactions with contemporary musicians, teachers, and scholars affiliated with the gharānās. Semi-structured interviews and participant observation facilitate the collection of oral testimonies, performance practices, and pedagogical traditions.

Traditional compositions and mantras, often preserved in oral tradition or regional scripts, are documented, transcribed, and translated where necessary. This ensures accessibility and allows for critical interpretation of their musical and cultural significance.

Introduction

Before discussing the ‘Dāgur’ (डागुर) Gharānā of Dhrupad, it's important to distinguish between “Dāgur” (डागुर) and “Dagar” (दगर). ‘Dagur’ is a Brahman title in northern India, including areas like Gwalior, Western Uttar Pradesh, Eastern Punjab, and Northern Madhya Pradesh. ‘Dagar’ refers to a place near Western Delhi, situated between two parts of Gadh (गढ). “Dagad” Bāni or Bān is often misspelt as “Dārga” Bāni (डागुर बानी), leading to controversies. Additionally, Dagar or Dagadh Bāni and Dāgur Gharānā are not synonymous.

Dāgur Gharānā

The Dāgur Gharānā was previously known as Sahāranpur Bin Gharānā. It became known as Dāgur Gharānā during Rahimuddin Khān's time.¹

From the time of Rahimuddin, this family started to identify themselves as the descendants of Haridas Dagur, using the title 'Dāgur'. They stated that they originated from a Brahmin family named "Dagur".

In his 1990 lecture at the West Bengal State Music Academy during the Music Appreciation course, Dr. Pradip Kumar Ghosh shared that Vishnupada, a type of Dhruvapada Prabandha, was popular among the Vaishnavite sect around Brajabhumi as a religious song. These songs, known as Padagāna, were primarily sung by Brahmins with titles like Pandey and Dāgur. Some later converted to Islam, possibly becoming Sufis involved in music, leading Dagur Gharānā members to believe their ancestors were Brahmins. Dr. Ritwik Sanyal, a disciple of Ziā Mohiuddin Dāgar and Ustad Zia Fariddin Dāgar, provided a genealogical tree in his article published in "Dhrupad Annual" 1986.

It is noteworthy that most of the Dhrupad Gharānās originate from the 'Senia' Dhrupad Gharānās. However, according to music historian Dilip Kumar Mukherjee, the Dagur Dhrupad Gharānā is an exception. Some musicians, particularly those from the Dagur Dhrupad Gharānā, identify it as 'Dāgarvāni' (डागरवानी) Dhrupad. It primarily focuses on the Ālāp style. Prof. Dr. Ritwik Sanyal has comprehensively explained the Dāgarvāni Ālāp in the following manner:

"The main art of Dāgarvāni singing lies in the meerkhan ālāp, which is structured on ten fineness's (Svara-laksana-s), artistically named ākār (आकर), dagar (डगर), dhuran (धुरन), muran (मुरन), kampita (कंपित), āndolita (आन्दोलित), lahak (लहक), gamak (गमक) and sphurti (स्फूर्ति). The ākār is a rounded fineness around each note, and the ālāp begins with its guiding figure word around the sadja. After establishing the ākār, the singer proceeds to weave zigzag patterns of note permutation, known as dagar, which literally means pathway. The dagars create imagery of tracks traversing mountainous areas.

When the singer expounds the sruti-s in a rounded and ascending order, these are referred to as dhuran. When the round melodic patterns return to a more sonorous note in a descending order, this process is called muran. The techniques of dhuran-muran are somewhat akin to the gamaks named ullasita and namita, as enumerated in Sangita-Ratnākara by Sārangadeva. This artistry conforms to the mizrab and java of string instruments such as the rudravina and the rabab.²

The sensitive modulations are termed kampita. When such modulation exhibits a swinging or wavy nature through the ascent and descent of notes, it is called andolita. In lahak, the Dagars make notes travel in a lashing manner with some breath force. In gamak, the notes spring with a modulatory force and are articulated with rounded lips. In hudak, articulation is heavy with notes pulled upwards using extra breath force, creating a hum sound similar to humphita described by Sarangadeva. In the final phase of ālāp, sphurti

¹ Dr. Bimal Roy, Sangita Savdakosh (Vol,II), (Kolkata, West Bengal State Music Academy, 1996) 154

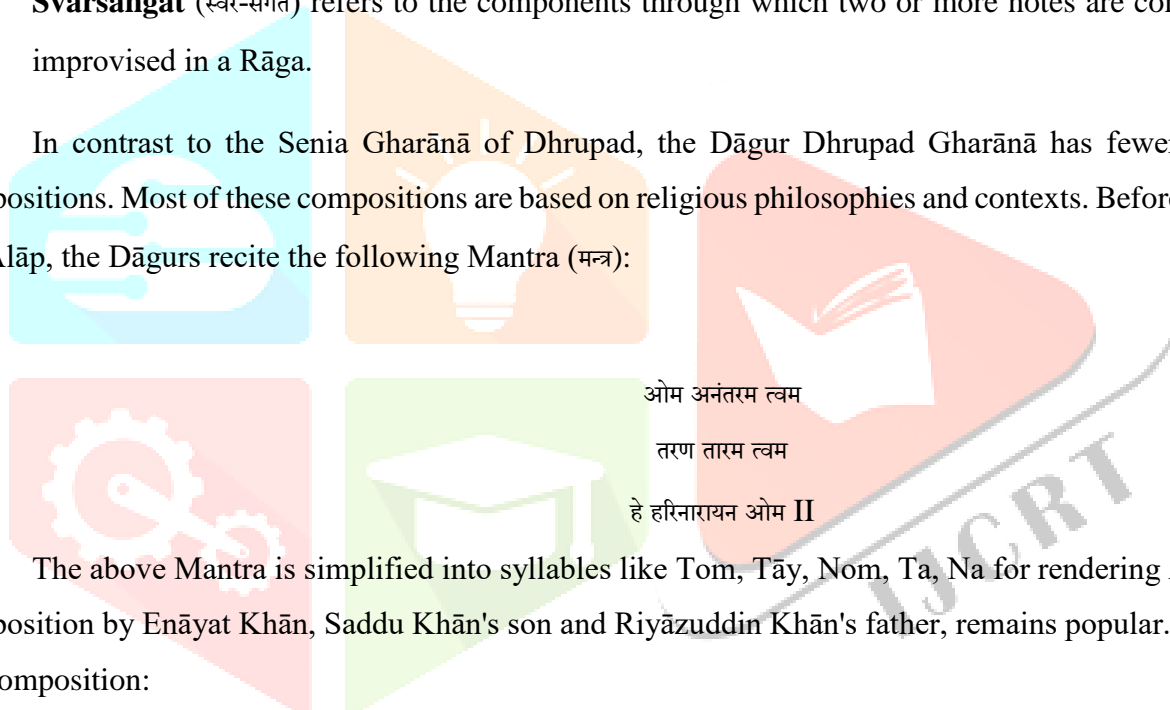
² Dilip Kumar Mukherjee, Gharānār Itihās, (Kolkata, A. Mukherjee &, 1977), 174

is performed at a very fast tempo, featuring several rhythmic variations in Thala movement.³ The Dāgur Gharānā from Sahārāpur Binkār Gharānā emphasizes 'Ālāp' in both vocal and instrumental performances, following specific stages:

The characteristics of instrument playing are:

- **Sahaj**
- **Gahan**
- **Jhurat**
- **Purat**
- **Tikh**
- **Cokh**
- **Lāg and Dānt**
- **Svarsangat** (स्वर-संगत) refers to the components through which two or more notes are combined and improvised in a Rāga.

In contrast to the Senia Gharānā of Dhrupad, the Dāgur Dhrupad Gharānā has fewer 'Dhrupad' compositions. Most of these compositions are based on religious philosophies and contexts. Before beginning the Ālāp, the Dāgurs recite the following Mantra (मन्त्र):



ओम अनंतरम त्वम

तरण तारम त्वम

हे हरिनारायण ओम II

The above Mantra is simplified into syllables like Tom, Tāy, Nom, Ta, Na for rendering Ālāp. A composition by Enāyat Khān, Saddu Khān's son and Riyāzuddin Khān's father, remains popular. Here is the composition:

Raga Bhairabi.

Tala Chowtāl

स्थायी II गोणे कि रात के भेनाई कोण से

बैठ रहे दुलहि अनबोले II

Betiā Gharana:

Betiā was historically a feudal state within the Champaran district in northern Bihar. Its name is derived from the extensive cane forest that once covered the area. The nearest river to this state is the Chandravat. In 1627 A.D., during the reign of Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan, the Bavan royal dynasty was established, with Ugrasen Singh as its first ruler. Towards the end of the Mughal era, the kings of Betiā began to assert their independence. However, with the advent of British rule, Jugal Kishore Singh became the first

³ Dr. Ritwik Sanyal, The Dagar Tradition, Dhrupad Annual, 1986, Varānasi

ruler of Betiā under the British Indian Empire. He was bestowed with the title of Mahārājā and was a descendant of Dhurup Singh.

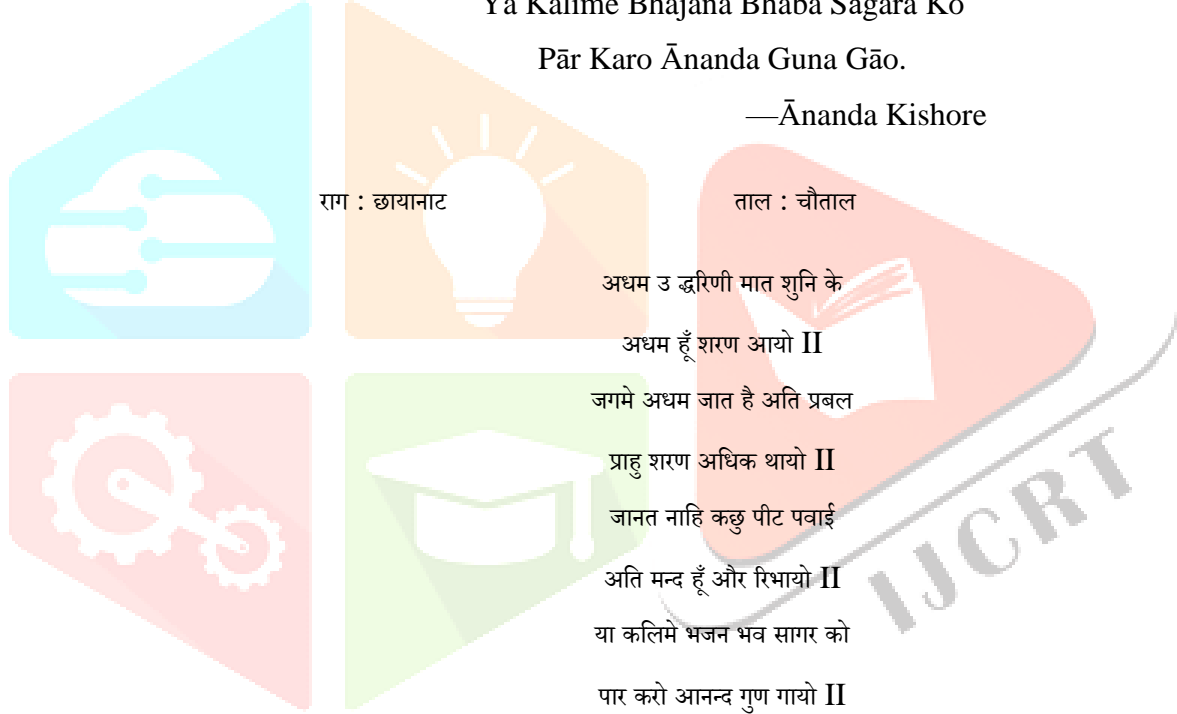
A few Dhrupad composition of this Gharānā are given below :

Rāga : Chhāyanat

Tal : Chotāl

Adham Uddhārini Māta Suni ke
Asama Hun Sarana Āyo.
Jagame Ahama Jāta Hai Ati Prabal
Tāhu Sarana Adhika Thāyo.
Jānata Nāhi Kachhu Pira Pabāl
Ati Manda Manda Hun Aur Rijhāo.
Ya Kalime Bhajana Bhaba Sāgara Ko
Pār Karo Ānanda Guna Gāo.

—Ānanda Kishore



—आनन्द किशोर I

Rāga : Bhairabi

Tal : Chotāl

Āda Rama Jyoti ko yo Jana Jāna Antarayāmi,
Pāre Yeise Yoi Dhāre Tāhe Deta Achala Sharana.
Hota Prathama Teja Aūra Purna ko Pratāp Badhata,
Ghatata Agha Re Jnāna Kumati Priti Apratita Charana.
Gāvata Guna Nārādādi, Ādi Se Suresha Shesa,
Anta Nāhi Pave Pār, Tum Se Saba Hoyi Srijan.
Māng Tu Hāi Bhakti Abheda, Dehi Mā Kripa Ānanda
Aūr Kako Sācho Bhaye, Tum Sabko Dāridra Harana.

—Ānanda Kishore

राग : भैरवी

ताल : चौताल

आद रमा ज्योति को यो जाने अन्तरयामी,
 पारे जैसे योह धारे ताहे देते अचल शरण II
 होते प्रथम तेज और पूर्ण को प्रताव वदत,
 घटत अघरे ज्ञान कुमति प्रीति अप्रतीत चरण II
 गानत गुण नारदादि, आदि से सरेश शेष,
 अन्त नाहि पावे, तुम से सब होयि सुजन II
 माड तु हैं भक्ति अयेद, देहि मा कृपा आनन्द,
 और काको याचो थये, तुम सबको दारि द्रहरण II

—आनन्द किशोर I

Rāga : Surat

Tāl: jhamptāl

Kālike Gagana Mey Lagan Karo nara Adham,
 Sangako Āye Na Jāye Jagata Mey,
 Bhava Sāgarako Chāhata Taran To

Prāna Karorey Pagana Mey Sharana Guru Key Mata Mey.

Tana Ye Hai Sapana Niza Nārana So Dekho Aba
 Kapata Tajikey Japa Hu Agha Ghatata Pala Mey.

Pāpa Tripāpa Santāpa Saba Chhuti Gāi

Laha Shri Ananda Japa Nāma Yeha Chita Mey.

—Ānanda Kisore

राग : सुरट

ताल भौताल

कालीको गगन में लगन करो नर अधम,

संगाकों आवे न जावे जगत में I

भव सागरको चाहत तरण तो

प्राण करोगे पागन में शरण गुरुके मत में II

तनय है सपन निज नैनसो देखो अनु

कपट तजिके जप हूँ अघ घटत पल में II

पाप त्रिपाप संताप सब छोटि गै

लह श्री-आनन्द जप नाम यह, चित में II

—आनन्द किशोर I

Rāga : Surat

Tāl : Chowtāl

Ye Batiā Mere Chita Chadi Nishadin Kālināma Tatata Rahey

Mo Rasanā Kahā Karū Rama Nā Thira Rahatā Neka,

Kāma Krodha Hobha Moha Matsara Ahamkāra

Yey Ati Durnileāra Māno Mast Gayand Ekatēy Eka.

Jāko Bash Karana Ko Bhakti Tuo Mahāvata

Jnāna Ankusha Sākara Vibeka.

Navala Kishore Aura Kāsō Binati Kara

Jā Ko Tua Charana Sharana Ko Tekā

—Ananda Kishore.

राग : सुरत

ताल : चोताल

ये बतियाँ मेरे चित चढि निशदिन कलिनाम रटत रहे

मो रसना कहा काँरु मन न थिर रहत नेक II

काम क्रोध लोथ मोह मतसर अहंकार

ये अति दुनिरवर मानो मरुत गयन्द एकतें एक II

जाको वशकरण को भक्ति तुव म्हाबत

ज्ञान अकुश साँकर विवेक II

नवलकिशोर और कासों विनती कर

जा को तूअ चरण शरण को टेक II

—नवल किशोर

Conclusion :

Of the two Dhrupad gharānās, the Betiā gharānā initially enjoyed significant popularity in Bengal. Visits to it, as well as the Varanasi or Kashi Dhrupad Gharānā, are noteworthy. Both gharānās attracted musicians from Bengal from the mid-18th century A.D. Another important Dhrupad gharānā that captivated Bengali musicians at the beginning of the 20th century is the Dāgūr Dhrupad Gharānā, known for its majestic Ālāp. These gharānās survived in Bengal through their Bengali disciples. The sequence of prominent Dhrupadiā-s from the Betiā Gharānā includes Ānanda Kishore Naval Kishore, Baktavarji, Sadāsiva Rāo, Shivrāyān Mishra, Guruprasad Mishra, and Kashinath, Pandit Falguni Mitra among others. Although Sadāsiva Rāo originated from Varanasi, he is considered part of the Betiā Gharānā. His son, Visvanāth, had several Bengali disciples such as Lāt Chānd Boral, Binod Mallick, Satish Chandra Dalta, Jogindra Nath Roy (Nātore), Amar Nath Bhattacharya, and Mānada Sundari.

Prof Ritwik Sanyal , Prof Kaberi Kar , Prof Sukla Chatterjee, Nadi Sishters , Pandit Samir Dutta, Pandit Nirmalya Dey Pandit Uday Bhawalkar, Vidhushi Sanchita Choudhury, Prakriti Dutta, Supriya Maitro among the prominent artist from the Dagar Gharana/ bani.

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