



The factors influenced the performance of the court musicians before the electronic age

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Abstract - Indian music is a wonderful blend of modernity with tradition. The 13th century marks the beginning of Islamic rule in India and the rise of Hindustani classical music in North India. At this time, musical geniuses were honoured as courtiers in the king's darbar. Under the protection and patronage of the king, they practiced classical music and their music was performed at the royal court. Musicians used to perform music in front of about 100 to 150 people with bare throats. The technology for amplifying the voice had not yet been invented. But the architecture of the royal palaces was such that the sound spread throughout the place. So musicians had to practice to increase the volume of the voice. From the beginning, they had to stay within the Taleem and Riyaaz. During this time many new forms of Hindustani music were created and some old forms lost their popularity as the nineteenth century came.

Keywords – Various factors, Performance, Court musicians, Electronic age.

Introduction

Music has a great impact on people's lives in Indian culture. All aspects of people's daily life be it physical, psychological, social, political are involved in music. That's why in human life, the purpose and occasion of music also changes according to the variation of human nature. For some it is the path of knowledge and for others it is just a matter of entertainment. According to human contribution to music since ancient times, two parallel streams of music can be seen in all societies of the world, which have always enriched each other with elements and have gradually evolved and developed themselves over the ages. One is exploratory classical music and the other is music emanating from the life experiences and feelings of ordinary people called Lokayat or Laukika or Folk music. Before Muslim rule in India, a single style of classical music prevailed in the country. After the Muslim era began in the country around the 12th century, it split into Hindustani classical music in northern India and Carnatic classical music in southern India. While temples in South India became the breeding ground for classical music, in North India classical music was performed at the royal court and flourished under the patronage of the king. In the north of India, cities like Delhi, Baroda, Gwalior, Udaipur, Jaipur, Jodhpur, Jaisalmer, and Agra were such most famous Durbars. Among these, the courts of Agra, Gwalior, Delhi, Baroda, Jaipur became heart point of classical music practice. From Amir Khusraw of the Delhi court in the early 13th century to Tansen in Gwalior in the later 16th century, Sadarangana of Muhammad Shah's court in the 18th century to Faiyaz Khan, the courtier of Baroda, all contributed to the development of Hindustani classical music by performing music at the royal courts. The present style of Khayal song originated in the early 19th century at the court of Jayajirao Scindia of Gwalior by Nathan Pir Bakhsh. Therefore, the role of the royal court in the development of Hindustani classical music was undeniable. So far, the period before the 20th century has been discussed. Now comparing this period with the 20th century and beyond, a major difference in performance can be observed that is invention of the electrical device, the microphone. Before the introduction of microphones, musicians had to perform with bare voices and there was no way to amplify the sound of instruments too. So the performance then was very different compared to the present music performance. The main discussion here is

which factors influenced the performance of the court musician in the royal court before the advent of electronic media.

Factor relating Audience

Performance is never a one-sided affair. It is a joint process of both performer and connoisseur. The connoisseur may not directly affect performance in all aspect but the connoisseur's taste, especially the number of connoisseur or audience may directly affect some aspects of performance.

Musical taste of audience – No culture can develop by denying people. No one can deny the fact that the people of this country gave preference to Persian ideology behind the incorporation of Persian culture into the native culture. People welcomed the new art created in this new mixed culture. This is always true that the decision of the connoisseur's taste is final in shaping any art. So around the 13th century when the ancient Prabandha song was gradually being changed its form, the influence of Persian cultured people can be seen behind it. During this period Prabandha song changed its form to Dhrupad, Chutkal Khayal, Kawal song and the most prevalent style of Hindustani classical music today, Khayal. There is no reason to suppose, from the sequence of genres or form mentioned, that Khayal is the latest product of evolution. By the 14th century, the original form of this style was created. In fact, it is because of the people's taste that this style is more prominent than others today.

In the north India every king had musicians in his court. The musicians who graced this royal court were some of the most famous musicians of the country. Only high-class connoisseurs and the upper echelons of society had the right to enjoy the performances of these musicians. Common people had no right to listen to this music. Because it was in the court and common people could not enter there. Naturally, this class of people had a high standard of taste in terms of education, association and personal lifestyle, which differed from that of the common people. It obviously influenced court music. Only the musician himself, from the chase of his artistic sensibility, took tunes from the folk music of the common people and added them to classical music.

Number of Audience - Generally in any musical performance the size of the audience affects the enthusiasm of the performer. But these court musicians were so famous and skilled in performing music that the enthusiasm of the audience was greater. So here the context is a bit different in the pre-electrical era. Here the discussion focuses on performance effort. Since musicians at this time had to perform with bare hands and bare voice, the larger the audience, the harder the performers had to make loud their voice to convey the sound to distant listeners. Usually, the number of audience in such court performance was 100 to 150 people. At that time there were no electronic amplification systems like today, so performers had to take on additional responsibility to make their performances audible to all the audience. Which today's singers or musicians do not have to take. Because modern amplification systems are able to enhance the robustness of the music while maintaining the subtlety of the tone. But in those days while singing or playing, the melody would not be audible to distant listeners if the tune were to be mild and low in volume according to the needs of the feeling. This is why musicians of that era had to be much more thoughtful and responsible in making the melody audible to all the listeners in their performances. Again due to that same reason there were many limitations in performance, which are now very less.

Factor relating Acoustics

With the advent of electronic aids such as microphones, loudspeakers, and amplification systems in the early 20th century, musicians' performances were possible to transmit to larger audience. Just as musicians had previously tried to reach distant audiences by making the sound louder when performing to a packed hall, royal courts were designed to help spread the sound too. These special properties, such as the sound dispersion of the Royal Court, are called acoustical properties. Among these acoustical properties, during performance the special features worked as the natural amplifiers are:-

Architecture of the Durbar - An observation of each court in ancient times shows that the construction was done in such a way that the sound could spread uniformly at all the side within it and the most basic acoustical

feature of each construction is, they are symmetrical in shape. By looking at the architecture of each palace like Delhi, Jaipur, Barada, Gwalior etc. one can identify their scientific acoustic behaviour. The rectangular shape of the halls, vault and dome shaped ceilings, arch shaped arcades created a natural reverberation effect in the hall which had added extra loudness in musician's performance.

Resonating power of the Drone instrument - In Indian classical music, this instrument is played always to maintain a particular scale with the main instrument or voice. It basically creates an ambience of the harmonic tone of the music throughout the whole performance. Before the electronic age, musicians used this instrument with their performance to create a resonance that helped to increase the amplitude of the total sound.

Bass quality of Timber - The characteristic of the sound that can be used to identify the source of a sound is called timbre. It means if a sound of the same frequency or tone is emitted from four different instruments, we can identify which sound is coming from which instrument by this timbre of the sound. Again the human voice is divided into four categories according to its tenuous and grave quality. Such as:

- Soprano – A high female (or boy's) voice
- Alto – A low female (or boy's) voice
- Tenor – A high (adult) male voice
- Bass – A low (adult) male voice

Now practically it can be seen that the graver sound is more sustainable and has range to cover more distance than a relatively tenuous sound. That means, bass tone will sustain longer than the soprano tone. An analytical conclusion can be drawn from here that the instruments used in Royal court before the electronic era were all larger instruments than today, from which relatively grave sounds were produced. As example, the sound of the old day's instruments such as Veena, Vichitra Veena, Surbahara etc. is much more grave than today's popular instrument Sitar. So their sustainable and loudness factors were also very high.

Factor relating Taleem & Riyaaz

Although Indian music has evolved with the times and has modern variations, its essence is spiritual. Indian classical music is a path of self realisation that is called Sadhana. Authentic Taleem and engrossed Riyaaz are the only ingredients of this Sadhana. Before the electronic age, the legendary musicians of Indian classical music were immersed in the pursuit of music under the patronage of the king. But there are many differences between the music of that era and the music of today. The most obvious difference is the use of electronic technology in music. In the early 20th century science only had the technology to amplify music. But to improve over the next 100 years, today, with the advent of digital technology, that change has been even greater. The effect of which is also noticeable in terms of performance. In the pre-electronic era, sound variation in performance was done entirely by the voice or specific organ. So the voice was adapted to produce a much higher volume by certain Riyaaz. However, certain exercises are still practiced today to enhance the ability to increase the volume of the voice, but it must be for musical purposes, not just to be heard by the audience. So we can conclude that there has been a lot of change between Taleem and Riyaaz since that era.

In this context a story written by Mr. Kumar Prasad Mukherjee, one can infer some facts about the situation of Riyaaz of that time and understand how different the present situation is. In his words, there were different types of taan described, 'Nanga Talowar' taan, 'Kadak Bijli' taan, 'Haathi Chinghaar' taan etc. Hassu Khan sang this terrible 'Haathi Chinghaar' taan that makes an elephant come out of its den. Hassu Khan stopped in the middle of taking the terrible taan from the stomach with the Gamaka. Blood came out of the mouth.

Hassu Khan is considered to be the greatest singer of all time from Gwalior. That means, at that time it was also practiced to give strain on the voice or chest or body to produce a certain level of volume and graveness of sound. However, in the era of electronic advancement, this practice has become irrelevant, rather students are now interested in the practice of more detailing and tone modulation.

Conclusion

Nineteenth century is a time of revolution in world history. At this time, new discoveries at the scientific level brought a lot of changes in people's daily life, education, psychology, and society. People learn to accept everything anew by coming out of old ideas. Scientific discoveries have become accustomed in all spheres of life and have also made their place in the world of music. Amplification system started to be used in music performance. The effort of musicians to perform music has become much easier. But in this case, it is wrong to say that the issue of performance has become easier. It has become possible to reduce excessive physical exertion in performance. The experimentation and processing of music never stopped. Instead, by a new way of manifestation the path of self-development has widened with tradition. A new horizon of thinking about musical expression on tonal modulation has opened up. As a result of the advent of this electronic system a revolutionary change can be seen that has blessed human civilization by the recording system. This made it possible to keep music alive. Due to lack of preservation, we have lost many gems of knowledge and science grown on the soil of this Indian subcontinent since ancient times. But today, with the blessing of this electronic technology, we are able to leave traces of our available knowledge to future generations. So in conclusion it can be said, technology can be used for bad purposes but the blessing of its innovation always sings the victory of goodness.

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