



An Analytical Study on the Role of Notation in the Preservation of Raagpradhan Bengali Songs

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ARTICLE DETAILS

Research Paper

Accepted: 26-02-2025

Published: 14-03-2025

Keywords:

*Notation, Raagpradhan,
Preservation, Bengali
music, Raga-ragini*

ABSTRACT

Notation is a form of preservation of music. In music notation system is one of the very important medium. To keep a particular form of music alive for many generations, it needs to be recorded. Notation can play a very important role especially in keeping alive those musical styles which are on the verge of extinction or losing popularity due to lack of publicity. A very popular Bengali music style called “Raagpradhan Bangla Gaan” is based on hindustani raag-ragini’s is somewhat neglected today in the evolution process. Listening to some raagpradhan songs of the golden ages, one can understand how strong the foundation of bengali music is. It will be very unfortunate if only due to lack of publicity and other reasons if this outstanding music form of Bengal deprive from the future generations. Some of the raagpradhan songs of the golden ages are the main bases of bengali music. But in this generation the way music standards are becoming more and more modern, in the future it is very difficult to say that the future generation will not be completely deprived from these tastes. The main objective of this study is to re-perform, study or analyse of raagpradhan songs in the future also. The main aim of the said research work is collection and preservation of raagpradhan songs through

notation system. Although notation is not the only method of music preservation. But through this method raagpradhan songs can be preserved memorably in a written form for many generations. The sole purpose of the discussion is to show how effective the notation system is in preserving raagpradhan song. Through the said discussion I've also tried to focus about the current status of this form along with the definition and characteristics of raagpradhan. Also including the role of notation in the preservation of raagpradhan songs and some notation preparation of this form are also discussed in this study.

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15030570>

Introduction:-

Notation is a written medium of preservation of music. Notation can be very useful in recording ancient music styles or music styles that are now almost extinct. During the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries one music form of Bengal became very popular. This style of song is known as **“Raagpradhan Bangla Gaan”**. Raagpradhan song is a masterpiece in the genre of Bengali music which is based on the raga-raginis of Hindustani classical music. Raagpradhan songs are the only music forms where both lyrics and melody have equal importance. The contribution of veteran artists are behind for the success of raagpradhan songs.

Evolution over time is very natural. In the process of evolution, raagpradhan songs have also evolved. Now modern styles are mixed in it's parts. However, it would not be wrong to say that the popularity of such raga based and tasteful bengali songs such as raagpradhan has decreased to some extent due to the way present music styles are becoming more and more modern.

The main objective of the said research work is to preserve raagpradhan songs by using the notation method, so that the popularity of this style continues in the future. The sole purpose of this study is to show how effective the notation method is for preserving a music form. Though raagpradhan is a very traditional form of bengali music, and also it has the warmth of Hindustani classical music, that's why it's needed to be recorded through written medium.

Problem Statement:

Each of the musical styles that have emerged under the influence of classical music has it's own distinctiveness. Classical music has always been the foundation of all other musical styles. Raagpradhan songs are the most traditional of all the musical styles that have emerged in the world of Bengali music. Raagpradhan songs have managed to maintain it's own identity even though there is a blend of different



musical styles. This analysis has been done to show the importance of traditional music style like Raagpradhan bengali songs even though the standards of music have modernized over time. This study addresses the question : Can notation serve as a viable method for preserving Raagpradhan songs for the future generations?

Research Objectives:-

1. To analyze the characteristics along with the differences of Raagpradhan songs with other musical forms.
2. To examine the role of notation as a tool for the preservation of Raagpradhan music.
3. To provide a sample notation of a Raagpradhan Bengali song for reference and analysis.
4. To assess the current status of Raagpradhan music in contemporary society.

Research Methodology:

This study employs a qualitative research methodology, utilizing historical analysis, textual interpretation, and musicological study to assess the role of notation in the preservation of Bangla Raagpradhan songs. The research is structured as follows:

Data Collection Methods:

Archival Research: Examination of old masterpieces of Raagpradhan recordings, manuscripts, and published notations.

Literature Review:

Analysis of text books and research papers on Raagpradhan music and it's connection with Hindustani raga's.

Interviews and Expert Opinions:

Insights from musicologists, classical musicians, and practitioners of Raagpradhan.

Analytical Framework:



Musicological Analysis: It's an analytical study of the structure of Raagpradhan songs and their notations.

Notation Documentation:

A selected Raagpradhan song of the golden age is transcribed into notation to demonstrate the practical application of notation in preservation.

Definition and characteristics of Raagpradhan songs:-

The tradition of adding raga-ragini's into bengali songs have started from around Charyapa's period. Incorporating the feel of raga's into bengali music was not very easy. The raga-ragini's of hindustani music are the base of raagpradhan bangla songs. But raagpradhan songs are not completely imitations of khyal. In this case, if we look at it's features, the matter will become more clear.

1. Raagpradhan songs are completely originated from Bengal but heavily influenced by Hindustani classical elements.
2. Raga - ragini's are the base of raagpradhan, but it has a blend of different music styles like Khyal, Thumri, Tappa etc. Incorporating the elements of Khyal, Thumri, and Tappa while maintaining an independent identity is the main feature of Raagpradhan music.
3. Unlike many classical forms, Raagpradhan songs prioritize both lyrical content and melodic richness. Lyrics are the life and melody is the body of this form.
4. The warmth of hindustani raga's is seen throughout the Raagpradhan songs. However it has the essence of hindustani raga's without strict adherence to their traditional constraints.
5. Raagpradhan songs are not performed according to the hindustani raga's. Raagpradhan songs are mostly influenced by Khyal. But raagpradhan songs have no restrictions like a khyal.
6. Raga bhav is the main thing in raagpradhan bangla gaan. Expresses the emotional depth of raga's without rigid compositional structures. Raagpradhan songs are not sung (rhythmless) like vilambit khyal.¹

¹ Karchowdhury, Amalendubikash, ' Raagpradhan Ganer Utsha Sandhane ', Farma KLM Private Limited, Kolkata 1984.



The role of notation in the preservation of Raagpradhan Bengali songs:-

An important method of preserving music is the notation system. It includes tone, rhythm, tempo and emotional direction. Notation systems can play a special role in the preservation of raagpradhan songs. The depth of traditional music such as raagpradhan cannot be conveyed through notation. Because not all types of music can be captured through notation.

The songs sung by some of the leading artists of the golden age like Acharya Jnanendra Prasad Goswamy, Acharya Vishmadev Chattopadhyay, Acharya Tarapada Chakraborty² etc. brought the world of raagpradhan music into another dimension.

Each of the artists has made their own gharana by their own gayaki in the genre of raagpradhan music. But the old records of raagpradhan songs may be slowly getting destroyed due to lack of maintenance. There are many recordings of that are old and cannot be heard properly. For these reasons it's needed to be preserved.

Ancient music are also preserved through written forms. Because there was no recording or archive system. Notation is an attempt to record the original tunes of raagpradhan songs and pass them on to future generations.

Notation of Raagpradhan Bengali song:-

Raga Darbari Kanada , Tritaal

Acharya Jnanendra Prasad Goswamy

Aji nijhum rate ke bnashi bajay

Sure bedan baje go kon hiyay.

Sukh smriti sathe oi sur mayay,

Kato dukkha meshe jeno aloke chayay.

Aji nishith rate jagi tarar sathe

Tari smriti ti niya nirab byathay.³

² Karchowdhury, Amalendubikash, ' Raagpradhan Ganer Utsha Sandhane ', Farma KLM Private Limited, Kolkata 1984.

³ <https://youtu.be/3aFRBbHnvpM?si=MQkdthmJWs5EhA8f>



Notation example of a Raagpradhan Bengali song:

+ 2 0 3
|- - - - | - - R S | d ḍ ṇ ṇ | S S R R |
| A ji | ni S jhu m | ra S te ke |
| g g R R | S S S S | R M M M | PM P P P |
| Bna S shi ba | ja y su re | be S da na | ba S je go |

| RM RMP P | M g R S | d ḍ ṇ ṇ | S S R R |
| Ko nSS hi | hi yay a ji | ni S jhu m | ra S te ke |
| g g R R | S S
| Bna S shi ba | ja y

+ 2 0 3
|- - - - | - - n P | g g M M | P P d d |
| S S su kha | smri S ti sa | the S oi S |
| n n nS̄ n̄ | S̄ S̄ S̄ S̄ | nS̄ nS̄ R̄S̄ S̄ | n d n P |
| Su S rS ma | ya y ka to | duS SS kkhoS me | she S je no |
| g g R R | S S R S | ḍ ḍ ṇ ṇ | S S R R |
| A lo ke cha | ya y A ji | ni S jhu m | ra S te ke |



| g g R R | S S M M | M P d n | Ś Ś Ś Ś |

| Bna S shi ba | ja y a ji | ni shi th ra | te S ja gi |

| Ś Ŕ n n | Ś Ś n P | M P n P | g g g g |

| Ta ra r sa | the S ta ri | smri ti ti ni | ya S S ni |

| R R R R | S S R S |

| Ra S ba bya | tha y a ji |

Current Status of Raagpradhan Bangla Song:-

If we look at the golden age of raagpradhan songs, we will see that the prevalence of this song has decreased somewhat in the course of evolution. However, the standards of this musical style, which was once at the peak of popularity, have not decreased. However, under the pressure of modernity, the favorable environment for understanding the taste of this kind of song is relatively less in the present society as I feel. But it cannot be allowed to perish like this. It must be kept alive. That is our responsibility. And the next generation of researchers has an equal responsibility too. It has to be brought back like the golden age of popularity and demand. For that, it is necessary to listen raagpradhan songs more along with the role of contemporary promotion will also help it to reach the peak of popularity like before.

Conclusion:-

There are many other genres of bengali music like raagpradhan songs, are need to be preserved. Although nowadays there are various modern technologies we have to record music directly. Moreover, one more thing is that through Guru shishya parampara or gharana system music has kept alive for a long time. But since raagpradhan songs do not have any gharana system hence, the notation system will be effective enough to keep this form alive for the next generation. It goes without saying that notation is undoubtedly useful of preserving music in a written form of those which has been fallen out due to neglect and practice like raagpradhan. To keep this unique bengali form of music alive it's need to listen it more and understand. Because the taste of the real thing is never less. Due to evolution, maybe there is a little change here and there, but I think there is no other form in the genre of bengali music which has



the taste, the joy like raagpradhan song. No other song can create this flavor , so this form should be keep alive.

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