



Thumri Artist's of the Kirana Gharana: A Study of their Contribution

Dr. Pratyusha Roy

Santiniketan , Birbhum, West Bengal, Email: pratyusha03131@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Thumri is an important semi-classical form of Hindustani music known for its expressive and lyrical character. Although it is traditionally associated with the Purab Ang style, artists of the Kirana Gharana have contributed significantly to its stylistic development. This paper analyses the distinctive approach of Kirana musicians in presenting Thumri, focusing on elements such as swara purity, melodic elaboration, and emotional expression. This study highlights the contributions of eminent artists and examines how their interpretations enriched the aesthetic dimension of Thumri within the Kirana tradition.

Introduction

The Kirana gharana, established by great musicians such as Abdul Karim Khan, is primarily known for its emphasis on swara purity and melodic elaboration. Thumri is one of the important semi-classical vocal forms of Hindustani music, known for its lyrical beauty and emotional expression. Many distinguished artists of this gharana have performed Thumri along with khayal and other classical forms. Musicians like Vidushi Hirabai Barodekar, Pt. Bhimsen Joshi, Dr. Prabha Atre, and Ustad Amir Khan have presented notable Thumri compositions in their repertoire.

The main objective of this study is to present a brief account of some Kirana gharana artists who performed Thumri. The study mainly focuses on their short biographical information and the Thumri compositions sung by them as well. Through this simple descriptive approach, the paper attempts to highlight the presence of Thumri in the musical repertoire of artists belonging to the Kirana tradition.



Objectives of the Study:-

- 1.To identify some prominent artists of the Kirana Gharana who have performed Thumri in their musical repertoire.
- 2.To present biographical informations about selected Kirana gharana artists.
- 3.To mention some Thumri compositions sung by all these artists.
- 4.To highlight the presence of Thumri within the musical repertoire of artists belonging to the Kirana gharana.

Literature Review:-

Several scholars and musicians have discussed the history and stylistic features of Thumri and different gharanas of Hindustani music. The musical tradition of the Kirana Gharana has been widely described in various books and research works. Studies on the life and musical contributions of artists such as Abdul Karim Khan, Pt Bhimsen Joshi, and Dr Prabha Atre ji has provide important informations about their repertoire and performance styles.

However, most of these studies mainly focus on khayal singing and the overall development of the Kirana gharana. Therefore, this study attempts to briefly highlight some Kirana gharana artists who have performed Thumri and to mention selected Thumri compositions sung by them.

Research Methodology:-

The present study is descriptive in nature. The information for this research has been collected from secondary sources such as books, journal, articles, biographies of musicians, and available audio recordings in the website. Relevant literature related to the Kirana gharana and Thumri singing has been consulted.

The background of Thumri:-

Although there is no exact information about the name and origin of Thumri, many have suggested that the style was introduced by the court of the Nawabs of Lucknow. The Hindi word 'Thumri', which means 'to walk in a dancing manner', is derived from this.

The first mention of this style can be seen in the 19th century in the classical dance form 'Kathak'. This style is said to have developed in the court of Wajid Ali Shah in Lucknow. According to historians, in the



19th century, a new version of Thumri emerged which was distinct from the dance and had a slower tempo. It was called 'Bol Banao'. It developed in Varanasi.

There are two parts of Thumri, namely Purab and Punjab ang. The Thumri of Purab ang has influences from Lucknow and Banaras. The Thumri of Lucknow is known as 'Bandish ki Thumri'. Pt. Bindadin Maharaj is a popular Kathak dancer of this genre. The Thumri of Punjab ang is more likely to feature Tappa work. Since Kirana is a Khyal Gharana, the Thumri of this Gharana is more likely to feature Khyal, especially in the Thumri songs of very famous artists of this Gharana like Ustad Aamir Khan, Bade Ghulam Ali Khan, Pt. Bhimsen Joshi, etc, the special influence of Khyal is observed in their Thumri songs. Apart from this, some of the other Thumri artists of this genre are Manik Verma, Hirabai Barodekar, Roshanara Begum, Pt. A Kanan, Firoz Dastur etc.

Some notable artists of Kirana Gharana:

Ustad Abdul Karim Khan:

Abdul Karim Khan was born on 11th November 1872 in Kairana town of Saharanpur, Uttar Pradesh, into a family with a long musical tradition, and whose roots were traced back to Ghulam Ali and Ghulam Maula. His father, Kale Khan, was the grandson of Ghulam Ali. Karim Khan was trained by his uncle Abdullah Khan and father Kale Khan. He also received guidance from another uncle, Nanhe Khan. Karim Khan was greatly influenced by the music of Ustad Rahmat Khan, a renowned artist of the Gwalior Gharana.

In addition to vocal music, he was proficient in playing the sarengi, veena, sitar, and tabla. Historically, he was a sarengi player, but due to the low status of sarengi players, he was interested in vocal music. In his early musical career, he sang with his brother Abdul Haq. Later, he met with Tarabai Mane. She was the daughter of Sardar Maruti Rao Mane, a member of the royal family. Karim Khan's first wife Ghafooran was the sister of Abdul Wahid Khan, a very famous and renowned artist of Kirana Gharana.

So it is very clearly seen that Karim Khan was closely associated with the Kirana Gharana. The peaceful delivery of his voice sets him apart from other musicians. The Thumri style that he introduced is completely different from the Purab and Punjab styles. The Kirana Gharana developed under his efforts, along with this, he completely changed the Thumri style of this gharana. Khayal, Thumri, Bhajan, wherever he sang, there was a special emphasis on conversation.



He generally avoided Layakari and Boltan, as he felt that these could spoil the musical atmosphere he had created. Some of his key disciples are Sawai Gandharva, Roshan Ara Begum, Sureshbabu Mane, Hirabai Barodekar etc.

Some of the Thumris he sang are mentioned below:-

- 1. Sajan tum kaheko neha - (Tilang Thumri).**
- 2. Jadu Bhareli Kaun (Gara Thumri)**
- 3. Jamunake Teer (Bhairavi Thumri)**
- 4. Piya bina nahi awat chain (Jhinhoti Thumri)**

Pt.Bhimsen Joshi:

Pt.Bhimsen Joshi was a shining star in the world of Indian classical music. He was born on February 4, 1922, in a Brahmin family. His first teacher was Channappa of Kurtakoti, who took lessons from the veteran singer Ustad Enayet Khan.

After learning Raga Bhairav and Raga Bhimpalsi from Channapa, there was a huge change in his singing. He became very attracted to music after listening to a Thumri by Abdul Karim Khan. From there, he developed a special attraction towards Kirana Gharana singing style and especially the Thumri style, which later made him famous as a Khayal singer as well as a renowned Thumri artist.

In 1936, he considered Kirana artist Sawai Gandharva as his guru and began taking musical training from him. The Bharat Ratna recipient was known for singing sargam, tihai, and especially the compositions of Kirana gharana.

He has performed various complex ragas like Puriya dhaneshree, Multani, Bhimpalsi, Darbari etc, with various complex taan sargams. Although there is no special collection of thumris sung by him. His thumris have more influence of Khayal. Some of his notable disciples are Madhab Godi, Narayan Deshpande, Upendra Bhat etc.

Some Thumaris sung by him include:-

- 1. Piya to manat nahin - Thuumri (Mishra Kafi).**
- 2. Piya milan ki aas - Thumri (Jogiya).**



3. Nadiya kinare - Thumri (Pilu).
4. Babul mora - Thumri (Bhairavi).
5. Sajan tum kahe ko neha lagaye - Thumri (Mishra Tilang).
6. Jamuna ke teer - Thumri (Bhairavi).
7. Ras ke bhare tore nain - Thumri (Bhairavi) etc.

Ustad Aamir Khan:

Ustad Aamir Khan was born on 15 August 1912 in Indore. His father Shahmir Khan was a Sarengi player and a renowned veena player of the Bhendibazaar Gharana. His grandfather Change Khan sang in the court of Bahadur Shah Zafar. So it was the musical tradition of his family that made Aamir Khan fond of music.

When he was asked to sing a Thumri in the court of Mirzapur, he refused. Because according to him, his mind was never attracted to this style. Aamir Khan is a self-trained artist. He himself improved his own singing.

He was particularly influenced by the singing of Abdul Waheed Khan, a famous artist of Kirana Gharana. He was particularly attracted by Abdul Waheed Khan's 'Vilambit' and Rajab Ali Khan's 'Taan' and Aman Ali Khan's 'Merukhand' style. Aamir Khan had a high voice and could sing in three saptak as well. Some of his disciples were Pt. Amarnath, Kankana Banerjee, A.Kanan etc.

Some of his Thumris are mentioned below:-

1. Piya ke aavan ki - Thumri (Khamaj).

Hirabai Barodekar:-

Hirabai Barodekar was born on 29 May 1905 in Miraj, Mumbai. She was a very famous Hindustani classical vocal artist of the Kirana Gharana. She was a disciple of Abdul Waheed Khan. She was born to Abdul Karim Khan, a popular artist of the Kirana Gharana. Her mother, Tarabai Mane, was the daughter of Sardar Maruti Rao.



Abdul Karim Khan sang in the court of the Baroda state and then he trained Tarabai Mane and later they got married. And gave birth to two sons Suresh and Krishna and three daughters Champakali i.e. Hirabai, Gulab and Sakina.

Later their five children namely Sureshbabu Mane, Krishnarao Mane, Hirabai, Kamalabai and Saraswatibai Rane became famous. Hirabai was trained by her brother Sureshbabu Mane. She was a famous singer of Kirana Gharana and later she received music lessons from other Kirana Gharana artists Abdul Waheed Khan and Abdul Karim Khan. She was able to get music lessons from her father for a very limited time and later she used to sing with her great-grandmother Saraswatibai Rane. Her first musical performance was at the age of 15 under the patronage of Kesharbai Kerkar.

She was adept in Khyal, Thumri, Marathi Natya Sangeet and Bhajan singing. She was the first Indian woman to start ticketed concerts. She was always very popular on stage, because her performances were very charming. She was the owner of a very sweet voice. She was awarded the Padma Bhushan and other awards from the Sangeet Natak Akademi. Thumri songs gained considerable popularity in her sweet voice.

Some of her Thumaris are:-

- 1. Lagi mori bindiya - Thumri (Bhairavi).**
- 2. Kahe piya bin chain - Thumri (Mishra Tilang).**
- 3. Ghiri badari rama - Thumri (Pilu).**
- 4. Ab ke sawan ke ghar - Thumri (Desh).**
- 5. Akeli dar laage - Thumri (Tilak Kamod).**
- 6. Kahe sataoo mohe sham etc.**

Dr. Prabha Atre:-

Dr. Prabha Atreji, a recipient of the Padma Shri and Padma Bhushan, is a very popular vocalist of Hindustani classical music. There is no doubt that she has achieved a distinguished career in classical music. Along with this, her contribution to the Thumri style of singing is also undeniable. She was born on September 13, 1932 in Pune. She learned music from Sureshbabu Mane and Hirabai Baradekar, but the music of Bade Ghulam Ali Khan and Abdul Karim Khan also influenced her a lot.



There was a uniqueness of her performances. Although she followed Bade Ghulam Ali Khan, her Thumris are not an exact imitation of any artist. One of the characteristics of her singing is her uniqueness. Because of this speciality she became famous.

In an interview, she said that she is very indebted to Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali Khan for her Thumri songs. She did not learn from Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali, but his Thumri singing influenced her towards Thumri songs.

Her singing style has a touch of originality and modernity in its foundation. According to her singing Thumri songs is not accessible to everyone. Some of her Thumris are :

- 1. Kaun gali gayo shyam - Thumri (Mishra Khamaj , Taal - Deepchandi).**
- 2. Baalama chedo mata jaa - Thumri (Mishra Khamaj).**
- 3. Rajani mein bairagan hoongi - Thumri (Kafi).**
- 4. Shyam kanhaayee - Thumri (Tilang).**
- 5. Jamuna kinare - Thumri (Maanj Khamaj) etc.**

Manik Verma:-

Manik Verma (16 May 1926 - 10th November 1996) was a renowned Hindustani classical singer of the Kirana Gharana. She was awarded the Padma Shri in 1974 and the Sangeet Natak Akademi Samman in 1986. She was equally skilled in classical music as well as light classical music, especially Thumri ,Marathi Natya Sangeet, ,Bhava Geet and Bhakti Geet.

She was a disciple of Hirabai Baradekar and Sureshbabu Mane, the son and daughter of Abdul Karim Khan, the founder of the Kirana Gharana. She also received training from artists such as Azmat Hussain Khan and Jagannathbua Purohit. Some of the Thumri songs she sang are mentioned below:-

- 1. Piya to manat nahi - Thumri (Mishra Kafi).**
- 2. Nahi banay giridhari hamri tori - Thumri.**

Conclusion:-

The present study briefly examines the presence of Thumri in the musical repertoire of artists belonging to the Kirana Gharana. Although this gharana is primarily known for its khayal tradition, several eminent



musicians have also performed Thumri in their concerts and recordings. Through a brief biographical overview of artists the study highlights that Thumri has also formed a part of the repertoire of several Kirana gharana artists.

Thus, the study provides a brief documentation of the artists who rendered Thumri within the Kirana tradition and presents a simple overview of their contribution to the performance of this semi-classical form.

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