



An Analytical Study of Ancient and Modern Techniques of Teaching Indian Music

Dr. Rohit

¹Asstt. Prof, Lovely Professional University, Punjab, INDIA

rohithkhanrukta@gmail.com

Abstract

India has a rich tradition of music from Vedic age. India has had a wonderful history of teaching music and through various mediums like the Gurukul, Guru- Shishya Parampara, Institutional, University etc. Ancient Gurukul System was an effective medium to teach and learn music from experts who were highly knowledgeable in both practical and theoretical study of music. Now the same trend of teaching and learning music being continued or there are accepted changes bringing in new trends of teaching music in the Guru- Shishya Parampara style. In the present paper, we shed light on various techniques of music teaching, which contributed in the growth of Indian classical music.

Keywords: Gurukul, Guru-Shishya Parampara, Indian Music, Guru

1. INTRODUCTION

The Guru- Shishya Parampara is an ancient tradition, a great lineage of Hindu faith. It refers to the unique relationship that exists that between a master who transmits teachings to his chosen discipline. In the world of Indian Music, the place of a Guru has been considered as the highest of all which has been well described in the following couplet:

“Guru Brahma, Guru Vishnu, Guru Devo,

Maheshwarah,

Guru Saakshat Parabrahma, Tasmay Shree

Guruve Namah ||”

Guru Shishya Parampara has been the most ancient and is also known as the best system. From the times of Veda, music education has been given by the Guru orally which is known as *Guru-mukh*. The student while living in a Gurukul would offer services to the Guru and at the same time, living under a stringent discipline, spending moderate lifestyle and perpetually practicing whatever education has been given to the student by the Guru and learning by heart was the only way to receive knowledge. The description on music education that we get from the *Vaidik Yuga* shows that there were no names given to any school or even there were no niceties on the numbers of students in each class. Whatever is available through passim sporadically they point to the fact that education of music and other art forms were taught giving personal attention and this precisely has been defined as *Guru- Shishya Parampara*. In this way knowledge of music was provided via *guru-mukh*. But, whatever literature or material is available in context to art forms of Buddha Period, therefore a few names and information of Universities come to light. The competency and scholastic commitment in Indian music is incomparable. The credit of constant development of this music goes categorically to the system of Guru- Shishya Parampara. The knowledge gained by the Guru through sheer hard-work, practice and experiments- all of it was delivered to the students. In lieu, on the same



principles, anything and everything learnt by the dedicated students from their Guru was saved, polished and the same was practised and experimented which made it bloom and develop. To acquire correct knowledge of any form of lore the best possible way would be to understand by the agency of Guru-mukh, that is why this is known as obtaining knowledge 'Guru-mukhi'. It is an undisputable truth that knowledge of music can only be acquired through direct contact with the Guru because music being a practical based subject, books and notations etc. had proved to be unnecessary. Literally, the ancient *Guru-Shishya Parampara* only, has made Indian music prosperous and accomplished.

In those days, the students used to live in the house of the Guru and acquire knowledge traditionally. This system is called *Gurukul* system of learning. The meaning of Gurukul is, "learning while living with the Guru in his house". In this period, those who had intense volition to learn music, they learnt music while living in an *aashram* of the guru for many years. After the full obeisance to the commandments of the Guru, the student would pass the final test for learning only after the complaisance given by Guru. After this test the Guru would grant knowledge with an open heart to the student and also take full responsibility of the student's future. Along these lines, as they spent most of the time together both the Guru and the student had suavity and intimacy in the relationship between them. No fees were taken by the Guru from the student. The student's devotion towards his Guru was what the teacher always cherished for. In short, in ancient times music education depended upon the Guru. There was no syllabus and neither there was any provision to write the notations of the Bandishes learnt. The student would try to imitate exactly the same way as rendered by

the Guru. In the olden days the practical aspect of music was given more weightage. The system did not give much importance to the intellectual treatment but the rules of the practical wing and primary values were not violated and only by the Guru- Shishya Parampara the student would graduate and become an artist.

II. GURU-SHISHYA PARAMPARA

History says that traditions have kept the institution of Indian music alive due to which there has been a continuity observed in the development of the music. Traditions bring-in a balance, perseverance and persistence in Indian music. A lot of importance has been given to the system of *Parampara*, which is a well-known truth, and the fact that without keeping *Parampara* of music in mind we cannot ever imagine to learn Hindustani Classical music. That does not mean there is no scope to do new experiments and inventions; in fact, they have always been a part of this. But all these were always inside the boundaries of ancient traditional music. The existing Guru- Shishya *Parampara* in the world of Indian music which consists of all the three aspects: *gaayan*, *vaadan* and *nriitya* have meandered through different forms and phases which later were efflorescent of originating *Gharanas*. *Gharana* system has a great importance in the music domain. The system of *Gharana* is found in all the above three aspects of music. Today also a student of music has to mandatorily learn from a Guru. But, the reason of slow and steady origination of narrowness in the relationship between the Guru and the Shishya was because Guru's tendency to hide the special qualities of that particular *Gharana* resulted into a drastic change in past thirty to forty years. Eventually what has happened is that the ancient knowing



has desolated from us which is indeed an enormous loss. But still there are many who want to reincarnate and involve themselves in the metempsychosis of the very admirable Parampara. That is why many intellectuals play an important role to bring forth the utility of this Guru-Shishya Parampara. To re-live the same, a very serious endeavour was made by Indian Tobacco Company- Sangeet Research Academy (I.T.C. - S.R.A., Kolkata). It is an effort by ITC which is offering service in this direction since a few years. They have tried to create an environment which was quite similar to the Gurukul Paddhati. Here, the student lives in juxtaposition with the Guru who takes care of the student.

III. INFORMAL TRAINING FROM VARIOUS MODERN MEDIA

In this modern age, there are a lot of educated persons who are curious or inquisitive about music and they want to satisfy their intellectual need about knowing the music or any art. For this section, the informal training method works better. On radio and television, there are many serials introducing music. There are many books, interactive CDs, websites, blogs, e-portals giving information on music by which one can get the basic information. Obviously, media cannot make a musician or researcher, which needs an extensive and in-depth training, but media at least provides basic information on music by which commoners can enjoy it in a better way and further be instigative for learning music.

IV. MERITS OF GURU-SHISHYA PARAMPARA

1. The Gurus had enormous knowledge and knew how to teach the most arduous of the things.

2. This Parampara used to take its time and due to this the students used to come out in a very perfect manner.
3. They used to inherit a certain style and had the efficiency in it.
4. In this the student was well trained and he had the full authority for his art form.
5. The student used to have very humble respects for the Guru and discipline was pursued due to this they got the opportunity to learn the good points of the attitude and art.
6. They were taught directly or face-to-face and there were lot of benefits of this style of teaching.
7. The environment provided to the student was made sure the he would come out an artist.

V. DEMERITS OF GURU-SHISHYA PARAMPARA

1. The student never got a glimpse of the other genres because he came across only one Guru.
2. There was no time period allotted for the course. The student had to depend on the teacher totally.
3. The ancient system did not entertain the theoretical wing of the art.
4. The Guru used to hide a lot of important points which the student used to be unaware of.
5. The student also had to do all the inferior daily house chores.

All is history as in today's world it is not possible for both the student and the teacher to have harmony on the basis of these narrow traditions.

To nurture and propagate the priceless heritage of Indian Classical music, beginning with Hindustani Classical Music, through the tradition of 'Guru-Shishya Parampara'. The aims and vision of the New Gurukuls are in



choosing classical music as an area of its social responsibility, ITC and Gangubai Hangal Gurukul has played an important role in the resurgence and nurturing of this rich heritage. The three basic objectives are:

1. Creation of an effective training system.
2. To rationalise traditional data with the help of modern research methods and technology.
3. Preservation and propagation of music.

This has provided security and the comforts of a home for both guru and scholar. Its training system is essentially the Guru-Shishya Parampara with suitable contemporary inputs. The quality of the average listener plays a vital role in the development of music. In the current Indian classical music scenario, where the audience has assumed the role of the most decisive patron, the task of nourishing a solid base of high quality listeners has become a critical factor for the survival of the best values in music. Gurukuls such as ITC-SRA, Gangubai Hangal Gurukul in Hubli has undertaken the task of creating a variety of platforms all over our country and abroad, which attempt:

1. To take high quality music systematically to areas and sections of the population who otherwise do not enjoy access to it.
2. To cater to specialised audience needs and create connoisseurs of music by changing the conventional conference mould and creating new thematic profiles.
3. To commemorate those veterans and doyens of classical music whose pursuit of music as a form of knowledge has enabled us to establish and perpetuate a community of shared values.

The relationship between the Guru and the Shishya is one of all-pervading learning and complete trust, born out of the Shishya's total surrender to the universal glory of the art. To the Shishya, the Guru symbolises the art itself, while for the Guru, the Shishya signifies

the continuity of the art. The Guru shares the sacred knowledge of the art only with kindred souls, sincere in their quest. The training at ITC-SRA has been to inspire students with an inner sense of mission in music and to foster the creative exploration of the greatness of music and art through the Guru-Shishya Parampara. The Academy, therefore, has prescribed no courses, syllabi, or examinations; nor does it offer degrees or diplomas. It, however, conducts a periodic and meticulous assessment of each scholar.

The call of these Academies has always been to allow a student to develop a commitment in life with a passion for learning, irrespective of course and degrees. In selecting its candidate, the Gurukuls assesses natural talent and the capacity to receive long and arduous training to attain the desired heights. Once selected, a scholar is expected to train under his or her guru, maintaining the traditional Guru Shishya Parampara. Candidates are short listed by the selection committee on the basis of a half hour recorded sample of their music. Successful applicants are sent application forms and are invited to appear for the final audition and interview before our Expert Committee. Depending upon their merit, the new entrants are placed in the categories of General Class students and Scholars. All receive free training under a guru allotted by the Academy. Those with outstanding talent receive scholarship to cover living costs, free accommodation, free meals and are in the honoured category of 'Scholars'. The process of assessment, appraisal and counselling continues throughout the training period of these students. Auditions in the shape of Wednesday Recitals are also part of this process.

In its endeavour to re-create the Guru-Shishya Parampara in its true spirit, ITC-SRA, Gangubai Hangal Gurukul provides boarding



and lodging to its scholars within the premises. It has a rich library, an exhaustive music archive and research departments, all of which nestle in a pervasive ambience of music. The selected scholars are guided to choose a particular Gharana. They live with a guru and learn from him or her. The daily practice of music, with experts accompanying them on Tanpura, Tabla, and Harmonium, is part of their life and learning in the Gurukuls.

VI. DAILY WORK SCHEDULE

All the scholars, resident or non-resident, have to report to the Prefect every morning at a prescribed time. Their day starts with '*riyaz*'. After that, the scholars go to their respective gurus for receiving '*taleem*'. The afternoon '*riyaz*' is done with the help of resident accompanists. Every day a scholar does a minimum of six hours of '*riyaz*'. Special classes on Dhrupad, Tala and Raga Analysis are conducted as additional inputs to the students. Special language classes to improve the phonetic quality and enunciation of the language of music and to improve overall understanding of music literature shall also be conducted.

Assessment: Assessment, appraisal and counselling are continuous throughout a scholar's training. Apart from the guru himself, ITC-SRA's Expert Committee takes an active part in this. The highlight of the appraisal process is that the Expert Committee guides a scholar to develop himself by listening to and critiquing his own recorded musical performance.

Gradation Test: A gradation test is held twice a year for scholars and once a year for General Class students. A student passing this stringent test is elevated as a scholar. Scholars too have to demonstrate continuous improvement and keenness to learn.

Research Work: The spirit of enquiry remains one of the foundations on which ITC-SRA ensures the continuity of India's musical heritage. The scope for research to enhance excellence in music is immense. From documenting nebulous, oral traditions to analysing and preserving their eclectic sources for future training needs, ITC-SRA probes all areas in the structure and material of musical traditions today. There is a central library and an Archives section has been established within the Academy for the collection and preservation of a wide range of books and manuscripts of music in English, Hindi and Bengali. As part of the library facilities, working areas are coming up for selected students, scholars and teachers of music, both in the Academy and outside. The archives contain press clippings, photographs and information about eminent musicians and other performing artists all over India.

Scientific Library: The Scientific Library of the Department contains valuable technical books and journals on Signal Processing, Acoustics, Phonetics, Speech and Language Processing, Pattern Recognition, Image Analysis, Music Acoustics, Neural Networks, Speech and Music Processing etc.

VII. CONCLUSION

The education given under ancient Gharana Parampara and today's Gharana Parampara is that there is no restriction as per Gharana is considered and thus independent styles are coming up and performers mostly see what audiences want them to sing. In olden period there was more stress given in teaching orally and now not only oral but many new aspects such as, writing, documentation, research and theory are also given weightage. Also, stress on overall intellectual personality development is given. New techniques like,



usage of technical appliances and equipment, Microphones, sound system, recording, video recording has changed the outlook of overall performance which have surely changed the traditional recognitions but also provided new directions into music. The era of singing without a Microphone has disappeared and thus its usage has in-turn given a new feature of learning techniques of voice-culture as well as pleasantness of voice. This is important because presently there are very sensitive microphones which easily catch the defects of the performer's voice, a player's touch of his instrument a dancer.

There is a lot of improvement in the techniques and trends, whether it is listening to music, learning music or its documentation. The availability of facilities has become easier to access. Such an environment has been produced that a lot of new possibilities have been created and will positively keep ornamenting Indian Classical Music which is unique of its own.

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