

Role Of Padma Vibhushan Pandit Channu Lal Mishra Ji In Transforming The Indian Semi Classical Music On The World Stage

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Abstract

Indian culture has been a culture of seekers. Having preserved the glorious history of sages who devoted their all to art. Indian culture continues to create a suitable environment for the creation of seekers from various fields even in the present times. Indian culture embraces seekers of various arts and provides them with an opportunity to blossom and flourish. In the land of such seekers, Banaras, many seekers nurtured their art and culture on the banks of the north flowing Maa Ganga and gave it fame. There is a long list of art seekers of Banaras. Like Bismillah Khan who brought the Shehnai to the world stage or Gudi Maharaj who gave a new dimension to Indian music in the field of Tabla playing, Pandit Kishan Maharaj, the same artists who made Banaras famous in the field of singing include Pandit Rajan Sajan Mishra, Girija Devi, etc. There is a list of respected artists. A special name in this list is Pandit Chhannulal Mishra. Pandit Chhannulal Mishra ji, along with being trained in the classical singing of the Kirana Gharana, has also achieved excellence in the semi-classical music of the Banaras Gharana. He gave global recognition to semi-classical music. The feeling of spirituality is reflected in his singing and on the other hand, a touch of Rasraj Shringar is also shown in it. Pandit Chhannulal Mishra Ji popularized the genres of Hori, Chaiti, Kajri, Dadra, Thumri etc. among the masses, due to which the music of Banaras became famous on the world stage. As a result of his dedicated feelings and efforts towards music, the Government of India honoured Pandit Chhannulal Mishra Ji with Padma Bhushan and Padma Vibhushan awards. Pandit Ji's singing is a rare combination of classical, semi-classical and folk styles.

Keywords

Banaras, Semi-classical Music, Popularity, Respect, Style, History of Indian Music, Types of Semi-classical Music, Folk Style

Introduction

Padma Vibhushan Pandit Chhannulal Mishra was born on 15 August 1936 in Hariharapur, a small village in Azamgarh district of Uttar Pradesh, as the son of Pandit Badri Prasad Mishra and Smt. Rani Devi. Pandit ji is the first child of his parents. Two younger brothers Pandit Vishwanath Mishra is a famous tabla player and Pandit Shivji Mishra is a famous Kathak dancer. And one sister Savitri who is adept in singing. Pandit ji was born in a very poor family where earning a livelihood was the biggest priority of the family, the situation was so bad that they had to survive sometimes empty stomach or by eating half of a chapati. Pandit ji was fortunate to be born in a poor but musical environment. Father Badri Prasad was a skilled tabla player. His primary education started at the age of 5, getting up at 4:00 in the morning and practicing was the first step of Pandit ji's daily routine. Pandit Chhannulal Mishra ji received his initial education from his father, after that he received training in Khayal singing from the famous singer of Kirana Gharana, 'Ghani Khan', after which he also got the opportunity to live in the company of Thakur Jaidev Singh. At the age of 27, Pandit ji got married to Manorama Devi, who was the daughter of Tabla magician Pandit Anokhilal Mishra ji. Overcoming the difficulties of his daily life, Pandit ji dedicated his life to music. Pandit Chhannulal ji is one of those select artists of India who are adept in singing all four genres. Pandit ji's singing has the seriousness of the Kirana Gharana and the playfulness of the semi classical music of Banaras gharana. He has given an unmatched presentation of his art by singing genres like Dadra, Thumri, Hori, Chaiti, due to which the name of Banaras and semi classical music is renowned at the world level. As a result of his dedicated spirit and efforts, the Government of India honored him with Padma Bhushan in the year 2010 and Padma Vibhushan in the year 2020. Even today Pandit Chhannulal Mishra ji is representing Kashi with his skillful

singing.

Research question

Many famous artists of Banaras have played a great role to establish their music on the vertex in the concerned field, but the question is what role did Pandit Chhannulal Mishra play in the preservation and promotion of semi-classical music like Thumri, Dadra Chaiti etc.? What style did he follow in presenting folk music on a classical basis? How did he successfully manage both the Banaras and Kirana gharana?

Pandit chhannulal Mishra ji as a classical and semi classical singer

Padma Bhushan Pandit Chhannulal Mishra ji was born in a spiritual and disciplined environment. His father used to wake him up at 4:00 in the morning and make him practice music. Pandit ji used to wake up early and complete his daily task in the morning, practice music and follow a fixed routine. Even today, Pandit Chhannulal Mishra ji follows a fixed routine and this is an important part of his personality. Pandit ji's family environment was religious and musical. His father Pandit Badri Prasad Mishra was a skilled tabla player as well as an expert in the genres of singing. His mother used to regularly recite religious texts like Ramayana, Ramcharitmanas etc. and the result of this was that this environment had a deep impact on the personality and life of Pandit Chhannulal Mishra ji. Since childhood, Pandit Chhannulal Mishra ji used to sing religious texts like Ramcharitmanas and Sunderkand etc. to his villagers. His singing was so emotional that the audience would get emotional and would lovingly address him as Vyas ji etc. After taking training from Ustad Ghani Khan and Thakur Jaidev Singh, he started doing small jobs in Muzaffarpur, Bihar to earn a living so that the difficulties of life could be made a little easier. Despite being a leading artist of the Kirana Gharana, his guru Ustad Ghani Khan gave him an independent style. When Pandit Chhannulal Mishra ji presented his program in the royal court of Darbhanga, the audience became emotional. He had a great desire to learn and could memorize any tune in one go. He used to listen to traditional folk tunes from the elderly women of his village and used to present those folk tunes by molding them into classical tunes. Pandit ji had so much passion and interest towards folk music that even today he is the only artist in the whole of India who sings 70 types of folk songs. During the presentation, he used to take special care of the language interest of the audience etc. Pandit Chhannulal Mishra's personality is full of simplicity. Referring to an incident, Pandit ji told that when he was honoured with Yash Bharti Samman, people from the media reached his house to take his interview, at that time he was filling water from the tubewell of his locality. When he was asked how he felt after getting the honour, he said very simply that honour and award is a good thing but the government should also pay attention to the problems of my locality.

This fact shows that despite being a high class artist, Pandit ji is a simple hearted person. Banaras has been the stronghold of semi-classical music and Pandit ji is its propagator. Pandit ji's great grandfather Pandit Jagdeep Maharaj ji was a renowned artist of Thumri, the same genes are present in Pandit ji. Pandit Chhannulal Mishra ji tells that for the last 50 years I have been fully dedicated to the promotion of singing styles like Dadar Chaiti Tappa Tarana Hari Kajri in Banaras and now I have handed over this responsibility to more than 100 of my disciples who will be the flag bearers of Indian culture.

Semi-classical music in India

The history of Indian music is very ancient. Human race has made changes in music according to their needs and has done new experiments. There were two streams of music, first was classical in which rules were strict and following the tradition was very important, on the other hand there was semi-classical music like Thumri, Dadra, Chaiti, Kajri etc. which are presented by weaving them in rasa and bhaav. Flexibility is natural in semi-classical music and its rules are not as strict as classical music.

While defining Thumri, the scholars say—"Thumri is just like a swaying gait which entertains the listeners". In semi-classical genres like Thumri, Dadra etc., notes are used with delicacy and softness. In these styles, the presentation of emotions is considered more important than the purity of the raga. Semi-classical styles like Thumri, Dadra etc. have been popular, melodious and erotic genres from the beginning.

If we talk about Thumri Dadra, its history is old. In ancient music, its name used to be Chaalikya. Chaalikya means--use of deceitful words. Over time, two types of it came into vogue, one based and the other Halisak. The style in which two friends used to sing while dancing holding hands, with Lord Shri Krishna standing in the middle, was based, while in the second type, Halisak, the friends used to sing while expressing their feelings by making Shri Krishna sit in front of them. This second style can be compared to the present-day Gat Bhaav Thumri. Thumri is a style of mixture of ragas in which one is allowed to go from one raga to another. In this, expression of feelings and colourfulness are the main destination.

Out of the three parts of Thumri, Purab, Punjab and Gaya, the Thumri of the east is divided into two parts--Banaras part and Lucknow part. In the court of Nawab Wajid Ali Shah of Lucknow, the singers used to sing in a dance-oriented way. In that period too, the feelings of union and separation of Shringar Rasa were expressed in Thumri.

Lucknow Darbar is also considered to be the birthplace of Thumri style.

Padma Vibhushan Pandit Chhannulal Mishra's great grandfather, who was a resident of Azamgarh district, came to Banaras and started living there. He was a renowned artist of Thumri, Dadra etc. People considered him the king of Thumri Dadra. Ustad Mojuddin Khan of Lucknow was impressed by his singing and became his disciple and learnt semi-classical music and later played an important role in the promotion of semi-classical music.

The credit for developing Thumri and Dadra in Banaras, the main centre of semi-classical music, also goes to the local women. These women had knowledge of classical music along with folk tunes. The kings and wealthy people of Kashi used to organize conferences where these singers were also invited with respect. Such artists have also played their role in the preservation and promotion of the tradition of semi-classical music.

Status of semi-classical music in medieval India

This period is very important in musical history. This was the period when the new civilization was having a significant impact on the ancient culture. In medieval India, music, apart from being a means of entertainment, played an important role in both religious and cultural practices. Due to the Mughal period system, Persian influence on Indian music increased. Historically, in the medieval era, excellent artists of Uttar Pradesh state played an important role in musical development.

Agra, known as Akbarabad, was the cultural capital and the main center of attraction for artists, while Lucknow was the city of nawabs. In Lucknow, especially Nawab Wajid Ali Shah was a great patron of music art. Lucknow was the development center of Kathak dance and classical music. These cities worked as cultural and artistic preservation centers. Here art was divided into two forms - court music and classical music. Court music, which had the patronage of the royal court and was run by the order of the king, simultaneously the classical music was growing in musical gharanas. It was following its ancient and natural rules. There was indigenous and Islamic influence in court music because in the medieval period, Indian music was under the domination of Persian music. That music was full of eroticism, whose language was indigenous and the rules were classical. During this period, the popularity of semi-classical music like Thumri, Dadra etc. increased on a large scale as court music. Lucknow court is considered to be the birthplace of Thumri singing style. Sub-classical categories like Thumri, Dadra etc. are emotional and free from classical rules, which are a powerful medium to display the emotions of dance or singing with subtlety. It became popular in high-class society as well, after being cultured and refined by the dancers and court musicians, where many famous singers gave popularity to this method by incorporating it in their singing. Among the famous artists, Girija Devi, Shobha Gurtu, Rita Ganguly, Bholanath Mishra, Mahadev Prasad etc. have given excellence to the semi-classical genre with their singing.

Famous semi-classical artists

Either it's Kashi or Banaras, the city known as the cultural capital of the country. Today in the storm of western music, this city has maintained its dignity, culture and the traditional fragrance of the soil. Even today, this city has preserved its traditional form. The artists and families of Banaras have contributed significantly in taking the ancient art of this place to the world level. Kalika Prasad, the younger brother of Pandit Binda Din Maharaj, trained many disciples and developed the tradition while living in Banaras itself. Therefore, it seems that Ustad Sadiq Ali Khan, Bhaiya Ganpat Rao, Jagdeep Mishra, Maujuddin Khan, and Binda Din Maharaj and their disciples popularized Thumri, Dadra etc. in Banaras and with the contribution of all these, the foundation of the semi-classical singing style of Thumri, Dadra etc. was laid. In this context, Shri Kishori Raman ji, an old music lover of Banaras, says that Indian music has been kept alive by the kings and artists here. Music gatherings were organized in the gardens of the nobles and the era of Thumri, Dadra, Chaiti, Tappa etc. was prevalent. Bhaiya Ganpat Rao, Mauzuddin Khan Pyare Saheb, Johar Bai, Janaki Bai, Badi Moti Bai, Siddheshwari Devi, Girija Devi, Gauhar Jaan, Shobha Guddu and Pandit Chhannulal Mishra etc. have made a special contribution in making Thumri Dadra more popular.

These artists accepted folk tunes within the limits of pure classical ragas. Thumri of Banaras especially adopted the folk element due to which Chaiti, Hori, Thumri, Kajri, Dadra etc. became the main attraction of the semi-classical music of Banaras.

Role of Pandit Chhannulal Mishra in popularizing classical music

Pandit Chhannulal Mishra is one of those few artists of India who is proficient in singing all the four genres. It is a matter of great pride that today Pandit ji has become synonymous with the Banarasi semi-classical singing tradition, mainly Thumri singing, all over the world. He has been promoting sub-classical music by practicing continuously for more than 50 years. Due to his unique creativity, Pandit ji has assimilated every type of Thumri from Purab, Punjab, Gaya, Pahadi. Regarding Thumri, Pandit ji says that this singing is based on classical music, in other words, it is very close to it, it includes alaap, bol banaav, growth of each note, rhythm, expression of emotions. And even in so many types, grace has to be maintained and this is the natural quality of Thumri. Pandit ji made many folk tunes famous by weaving them into classical ragas. Folk songs sung on various occasions in the village like Sohar, Chaiti Kajri Barhamasa etc. were composed and broadcasted by Pandit ji from the stage.

One of the most famous holi songs of Pandit ji (Khele Masane Mein Hori) is the synonymous of Holi of Kashi. Pandit Chhannulal Mishra ji never followed the policy of discrimination in his life. He trained many disciples who are today flying the flag of Kashi's tradition all over the world. Padma Vibhushan Pandit Chhannulal Mishra ji carries forward the tradition of both Kirana Gharana and Banaras Gharana. Pandit ji's singing is a wonderful confluence of classical, spirituality and folk art. Pandit ji has taught more than 100 students in his 50 years of experience in Banaras who are providing their excellent services in many institutions. Among his famous Chaiti songs, "Chait Mas Bole Re Koyaliya Ho Rama" and in Holi songs, "Rang darungi nand ke lalan pe" are very famous. Under spiritual music, his presentation of Bhajan Kirtan with his prominent disciples at Rajghat in Delhi on the occasion of Gandhi Jayanti is particularly noteworthy and this process continues uninterrupted. Pandit Chhannulal Mishra ji has dedicated his entire life to music and as a result of this dedication, the Government of India has honoured him with Padma Bhushan and Padma Vibhushan awards. Pandit ji's recorded and non-recorded songs are available which spread the beauty of semi-classical music and musical joy in the mind.

Result and discussion

Many singers in India are promoting Indian music by performing in the country and abroad. But Padma Vibhushan Pandit Chhannulal Mishra's style of displaying Indian music in its classical, spiritual and folk form is world famous. Earlier, classical artists did not like to sing semi classical or folk music on stage. They used to disrespect this genre by considering it as trivial music. Pandit Chhannulal Mishra has sung popular folk tunes in classical Ragas such as Sohar, the folk music sung on the occasion of birth of children, Kajri of the rainy season and Barahmasa etc. by molding them into classical form. Due to which these folk tunes became popular among the common people and musical artists. Semi-classical songs also made a very good mark in film music, due to which semi-classical music was used extensively in film music. The way Pandit Chhannulal Mishra has established his traditional style through modern innovation, it can certainly be said that Pandit Chhannulal Mishra has played an important role in establishing the semi-classical music of Banaras and Indian music at a high level.

Conclusion

When experiments and modern techniques of singing are combined, a musician is able to create such a composition that becomes famous at the world level. The reputation of a musician depends on the technique and experimentation that he uses to enhance his musicality. A musician or singer takes inspiration from traditional music and by successfully using his technique, fills the music with such a colour that it directly connects it to the minds of the listeners. In the medieval period, when music went into the hands of courtesans, it started getting socially ostracized. The high class singers or artists looked at the semi-classical style with expectation, due to which the emotional aspect of singing was marginalised. As a result of the emphasis on meaningful experiments and innovation by some scholars and musicians, a new form of semi-classical singing developed. And in today's music, sub-classical music is used prominently to express beauty in the styles of Hindustani classical music and for a beautiful conclusion of singing. In modern music, it is not considered to be a low-grade singing, rather it is considered to be an excellent conduct of singing. Semi-classical music is considered a complete part of singing. As a result of the tireless efforts and dedication of Padma Vibhushan Pandit Chhannulal Mishra ji, this singing is very popular. Apart from film music, the Government of India and the State Government are doing many works together in this direction. Programs like Thumri Festival and Sangeet Natak Academy Thumri Award etc. are meaningful results of such a direction. Such programs or competitions are also being organized in universities, due to which this singing is moving towards prominence and spreading and propagating indian semi-classical music at the world level.

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