

Ragas originating from Punjab

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A consensus exists among anthropologists, researchers and musicologists indicating that classical music had its osmosis in devotional and folk songs that were created unconsciously by anonymous melodists and bards during different periods in history. They also agree about the almost simultaneous evolution of poetry, legends, epochs and folk tales.

The esoteric art music, therefore, has been traditionally furnished by succeeding generations of musicians in consonance with the yearnings, aspirations and cultural sensibilities of the later generations of groups, tribes or individuals whose ancestors originally contributed to the further refinement of the classical genres.

As a natural corollary to this phenomenon, every basic or supplementary classical formulation, invariably, bears the name of a tribe or an ethnic group of people, that either lived in different areas of Pakistan or came to settle in this part of the world at certain periods in history. Later, they either spanned out into the vastness of the sub-continent or migrated to neighbouring countries such as Central Asia, Afghanistan, Iran, Nepal and even far-off places

For the sake of brevity, only the origin of a few ragas will be discussed in this essay. These ragas are specially suited for the transmission of emotions and temperaments of the people of Punjab and reflect (and to a greater extent interpret) their cultural sensibilities.

Three ragas, among several others, are unmistakably used by the people of Punjab to express their creative urges, and for the communication of their emotional sentiments created during different seasons. However, the inhabitants of other areas in the subcontinent have also creatively employed the cathartic potential of these ragas. The people of Punjab have a prior claim to these musical formula-

who use the easily identifiable melodies composed in Raga Bhaivreen. On the basis of its massive use for the expression of so many moods and emotions of Punjabis, the claim about its sprouting from the soul of Punjab is further substantiated.

Similarly, songs composed in the pentatonic (of five notes) Raga Tilang are used throughout the length and breadth of Punjab, specially during marriage celebrations. Almost all songs rendered by female friends of the bride and old ladies related to the groom are composed in this particular-

Punjabi hero. Almost all the recitals, pointing to the brave acts of Dullah Bhatti, are provided melodic raiments woven with the fabric of Raga Tilang.

Lexicographically, folk songs and tales are defined as "the traditional, typically anonymous art of the people; that is, an expression of community life, distinguished from academics or self-conscious or cosmopolitan expression." They represent the masses of the people in a homogeneous social group, or contrasted with the individual, or with a selected class. From the anthropological standpoint "when many groups, tribes, etc, merge to form a people, a nation, or

down into the plains, in search of means of livelihood, leaving their folks, including wives and children behind in the mountainous villages. They are separated from their kith until such a time as winter lasts or they find suitable jobs in big cities, enabling them to settle there on a quasi-permanent basis. In these circumstances, they call their families to live with them in cities.

It is during this interregnum that the wives suffer the pangs of separation, and in their melancholic loneliness express their sentiments by singing songs composed in Raga Pahari. These melodies are not created or recreated by them. They simply use the tunes and songs passed on to them through a chain of succeeding generations, invented long ago by groups or individuals whose identities cannot be established now.

Again, the lyrical contents of these songs, in combination with the melodies, help the singers express their sentiments, that metamorphose in producing a catharsis of pent-up feelings. The songs crooned by womenfolk are based on tunes set within the parameters of Raga Pahari.

To fully



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Afghanistan, Iran, Nepal and even far-off places such as Sri Lanka. A critical scrutiny of the names of these tribes or ethnic groups currently inhabiting different regions of Pakistan (often used as surnames) reveals a definite relationship with the names of a number of ragas. One can cite a large number of examples, but only a few will suffice to substantiate the point.

Tribe or individual — Name of Raga

Tilanga — Tilang
Mian (Taansen) — Mian ki Todi
Ahir — Ahir Bhairon
Baaz Bahadur — Bahadri Todi
Gojar — Gojri Todi
Bhairai — Bhairveen

Many ragas are region specific, as they clearly reflect on the environment, hopes, fears, yearnings and other emotions of the people who live in these particular areas.

because these ragas are claimed to have originated, refined and been extensively used by the people in different parts of this province.

The example pertaining to the evolution of Raga Bhairveen is being cited to proceed further in this discussion. Its scalar foundations are laid on all the soft (*komal*) notes of that (scale). It is used for the recital of mystical poetry of Punjabi saints, specially Waris Shah, that has been immortalized in the form of Heer. Almost all crooners of Heer recite its lyrics in melodies composed in Raga Bhairveen.

Heer, the versified story of the legendary love affair between Heer and Ranjha, is truly reflective of the atmospherics and cultural environment in the rural hinterland of the Punjab. Some other folk tales and epochs from Punjabi rural hinterland are also rendered by bards and wandering minstrels,

ular classical mode of melodic expression, as it was found to be specially suited to convey the mixed feelings of euphoria and melancholia expressed on such occasions.

The bride's relatives, specially the parents, are overwhelmed with the feelings of sadness at the time of her departure from their home, whereas those related to the groom feel happy and jubilant as they are overtaken by a certain sense of euphoria. Songs pertaining to wedding ceremonies celebrated in Punjab are so set to musical scores (in Raga Tilang) that they truly communicate the feelings of both the marriage parties. Of course, lyrics significantly contribute to enhancing the impact of these songs.

Raga Tilang is also used for the poetic rendition of the epoch of Dullah Bhatti, which eulogies the act of bravery of the legendary

circumstances bring them into close touch with each other in times of war or peace, an attempt is made for the creation of common areas of emotional experience and hellip."

It is the synthesis of these feelings that cause the invention of a common mode of musical expression, that after refinement acquires the status of a classical genre. Ragas Tilang and Bhairveen have undergone this transformation in the process of their evolution as classical genres.

Another raga, commonly used by the residents of the mountainous areas of northern Punjab, is Pahari. Its very name points to its geographical location and regional orientation. This mode is particularly suited for the expression of the pangs of separation. Male members of the families from more or less the barren, hilly tracts move

needs to listen to a large number of film songs composed in Raga Pahari during the past six decades. Invariably, such scenes depict the lives of people hailing from mountainous regions, and show the departure of brides after marriage ceremonies, pegged to the themes of ragas Tilang and Pahari. The extensive use of Raga Bhairveen in composing film songs that reflect rural backgrounds provides yet another proof of its folk origin.

In southern Punjab a large number of folk songs have also been composed in the strand of Raga Bhairveen. Similarly, Siraiki and Sindhi *kafis* are generally believed to have provided the basis for evolution of the *kafi* scale (*thath*) and Raga Kafi, that emerged its current ambience after a long period of time during which *kafi*-singing became the vogue in southern Punjab and Sindh.