

Thematic Compositions and Theme based programmes by Dr. Kumar Gandharva

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Foreword

Pt. Kumar Gandharva is major artist in North Indian Classical Music, well known for his impactful singing and intellectual renditions. He was the pioneer in presenting thematic concerts in the field of Hindusthani classical vocal music (Page No. 83, Bahulekar Shilpa, “Kumar Gandharva: Ek Srijan Yatra”) in the middle of 20th century.

Research Objective

To study and present the nature and purpose of thematic compositions and concerts of Pt. Kumar Gandharva.

Research Scope

This study confines itself into the time period between 1952 to 1985, when Pt. Kumar Gandharva presented his thematic concerts. The objective is to analyze the concerts and composition based on themes.

Methodology

The research methodology used in this paper is mainly descriptive, moreover analytical method is also used to study thematic compositions.

Core

Born on 8th April 2024 at a remote town Sulebhavi in Belgaon district, Karnataka, Pt Kumar Gandharva was a child prodigy. His father and elder brothers were singers already, but as a child Kumarji didn't sing till he was seven. One day he suddenly started singing a song by Bal Gandharva, ‘Tat kari duhita vinasha’ (Meaning: Father intends to devastate her girl child). His original name was **Shivaputra Siddharamayya Komkalimath**, and a Gurukul Mathaswami (Their family mentor) conferred the title “**Kumar Gandharva**” upon him, after listening to his music. As his singing was extra ordinary, his father Mr. Sidhharamayya formed a group of accompanists and started stating his concerts at different cities throughout Northern India. It

continued till he met Prof. Deodhar in Mumbai. He put his son into his tutelage, where Prof. Deodhar introduced the essentials of Classical Music. Within merely three years, Kumar started presenting core classical music, without mimicry.

After 1946, he actualized that he can present the music as conceived by him, to an extent. He got married in 1947. In November 1948, he was suffered by Tuberculosis. During that period, he was not allowed to open his mouth to sing. After five long years, he came up with a significant change in his presentation.

Meanwhile, he studied folk music and traditions of Malwa, where his dwelling town Devas was situated. He collected numerous folk tunes and presented some of them in a theme – based program, **Malwa ki Lok Dhunen.**

Rituraj Mehfil

To mark the arrival of Vasant ritu, he presented the thematic program of Vasant Ritu, to which he names as “Rituraj Mehfil”. Later, the program merged into a bigger one, called “Geet Varsha”.

Geet Varsha, Geet Hemant ad Geet Vasant

These theme-based programs were conceptualized by himself. He once said that he was intended to express the seasons by means of music. He tried to include the festivals that are related to these seasons. For an instance in Geet Hemant, he included his self-composed bandish on Raga Bhimapalasi – “Udai do patang mhara, do”. Another example: in the same was, he found that there is no bandish depicting the festival of Diwali, one of the most revered festival of Hindus. He then composed a bandish on Diwali, “Deep ki jyot jare re subh Ghari”

Rag Darshan

Pt. Kumar Gandharva found that, singers sing the same raga in different types, and consider their type as pure. But he differed on it in this opinion, and accepted all the variants of any particular raga. Hence, to clear the listeners’ perspective on different types of a single raga, he presented some Raga Darshanas like Gaud malhar darshan, Bhoop Darshan etc.

Saint poetry

Pt. Kumar Gandharva studied the literature of Indian saint poets. He visualized that how that particular poet will sing his poetry, and then decided how to sing the devotional verses. “Triveni” an album which includes verses of Saint Soordas, Saint Meera and Saint Kabir. His motto was to deliver the bhajans in such a way, that the listener should feel the difference in its delivery. He used to say that, Soordas was a purely classical singer. So, his verses should also be treated in that way. So he composed Soordas bhajans in classical music way. In the same way, Meera was singing her bhajans, playing Ektari and dancing simultaneously. So while listening her devotional verses, the listener should feel the spell of dance.

On the same track he composed and presented the poetry of Saint Tulsidas and Saint Tukaram also.

Mala Umajlele Bal Gandharva (Bal Gandharva: as conceived by me)

Bal Gandharva was a senior singer to Kumar Gandharva. Bal Gandharva sung primarily on stage, which was later called Natya Sangeet or stage music. He had such an unwavering effect of his style on that type of music, which was remembered by many generations after too.

Pt. Kumar Gandharva studied the presentation style of Bal Gandharva and he rendered his thought on Bal Gandharva's gayaki.

Nirgun Bani

The most revered part of Pt. Kumar Gandharva's devotional music comes the next. He studied the folk bhajans prevalent in the Malwa region, and developed a revolutionary style of singing Nirguni Bhajans. These bhajans included verses of Saint Kabir, Gorakh Nath and other Nath Panthi saints. He studied the doctrine of nirgun bhakti, dived deep into their context of singing bhajans and then he started singing nirguni bhajans. Some bhajans were kept as it were, and some were composed by him.

The style of singing nirguni bhajans sheerly contradicts to the traditional bhajan singing style in Maharashtra. Purely and precisely placed notes, pure rhythm and a unique style of uttering the wordings are some of its distinguishing characteristics.

Later he presented a thematic program based on these bhajans, its title was **Nirgun Bani**.

After Pt Kumar Gandharva recovered from the deadly disease, he financially became very weak. To help him, his admirers founded an institution named "**Anoop**" and organized his various concerts. It helped him economically also, and he got a chance to present his creativity to the listeners.

Findings

It is found that the thematic compositions and concerts presented by Pt. Kumar Gandharva try to contribute in the field of Hindusthani classical music in its own way.

References

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