A Comparative Study of Borgeet and Dhrupad

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Introduction

This seminar paper is based on an analytical study of singing style and lyrics used in Borgeet and Dhrupad. Dhrupad tradition is invariably a major heritage of Indian culture. The origin of this music is linked to the recitation of Sama Veda, the sacred Sanskrit text. Dhrupad is the oldest vocal and instrumental style, and the form from which the extant Indian classical music originated. The continuity of Dhrupad, a contemplative and meditative form, has been sustained by traditions of devotional music and worship. ‘Dhruva-pada’ is accepted to be the original word for Dhrupad. The first component of this compound is ‘Dhruva’ which literally means ‘stationary’ or ‘unchanged’ and the second component ‘pada’ means ‘verse’ or ‘poetic expression’. Borgeet came into existence in the hand of Sankaradeva in the 15th century and was later enhanced by his disciple Madhabadeva. The chief task of creating Borgeet was similar to Dhrupad and it helped to spread the devotional faith of Lord Krishna in Assam. The period of the evolution of Borgeet was the time of Vaishnavite moment in all over India. Followers often gathered at the time of pilgrimage at four holy places (char dhaam) and those are the best places for cultural exchange. Sankaradeva was influenced by Dhrupad gayaki (singing style) and he created a new style of music in Assam called Borgeet. He also put some local flavour within it. So Borgeet carried the heritage of the oldest form of Indian classical music. Now a days Sattras of Assam keep Borgeet alive by living tradition, that is mouth to mouth or guru-sishya parampara. The singers of Borgeet are decreasing day by day due to many circumstances like poor economic conditions, unemployment, globalisation and lack of recognition. This seminar paper strives to highlight the similarities and dissimilarities of two ancient singing forms of India- Dhrupad and Borgeet.

Aim and Objectives

a) To know the literary aspects of Borgeet and Dhrupad.

b) To explore the similarities and differences in the singing style of Dhrupad with Borgeet.

c) To compare the singing style and theme of Borgeet and Dhrupad.

Methods

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The nature of music is spiritual. Seeking not to entertain, but to induce deep feelings
remark that rather than to entertain the audience, its purpose is to worship Lord Krishna. At that time Borgeet was only referred to as “Geet” but being greatly influenced by the practice of using the adjectival prefix ‘Bor’ the devotee disciples of Sankaradeva added the prefix Bor before ‘Geet’ and the name ‘Borgeet’ was coined. This bore upon the musical grandeur of the songs in both aspects i.e.; musical and literary. Though it is a part of the Vaisnnavite religion propagated by Sankaradeva, its cultural value means a lot to Assamese community. It helps the devotees to develop Bhakti (devotion) to Lord Krishna and eventually reach Lord Krishna.

On the other hand, Dhrupad is accepted to be the oldest existing form of North Indian classical music. The Dhrupad tradition is invariably the oldest heritage of Indian culture. The origin of this music is linked to the recitation of Sāmi Veda, the sacred Sanskrit text. Dhrupad is the oldest vocal and instrumental style, and the form from which the extant Indian classical music originated. The continuity of Dhrupad, a contemplative and meditative form, has been sustained by traditions of devotional music and worship. Indeed, the leading maestros of Dhrupad, in order to enrich its quality and also for it to be acceptable by the native folk of Assam by Sankaradeva.

Musicological analysis of Borgeet and Dhrupad

Natyashastra of Bharata is honored as the fifth Veda or the first theoretical analysis on music. Its musical chapters describe ten characteristics of Jati - Gayan, which is accepted as the oldest form of classical music in India. Those are; Graha, Angsh, Taar, Mandra, Nyaas, Apanyaaas, Alpatwa, Bahutwa, Sharabatwa and Ourabatwa. Moreover the singing styles of Indian classical music depends on six different counters i.e. notes (Swar), lyrics (pada), rhythm (tala), rasa (mnemonic syllables produced on various instrument), birud (subject of lyrics) and teenak (meaning less syllables like, num, tum, re etc.).

Till that time the term raga of Indian classical music was under a deep shadow. The word raga was hardly used in Natyashastra with some prefix like-

1. Jatraram Shrutiksetra (Varanasi University; NS,Sl.no.28.35)¹
2. Yesmina Bhasati Ragastu (do; NS, Sl. no. 21. 72)
3. Raga-Marga Prajukakahaka (do; NS, Sl. no. 31. 39)
4. Ibhamanam Veena Ganam Natyam Ragam na Gachyati (do--32. 35)
5. Chalaga Ragaha Samagrahach Ibha Ka (do—32.475)

But there is no definition about Raga in Natyasahastra. Matanga first used the word Raga in brief, in his book “Brihaddeshi” from the 4th to the 5th century. After that time raga became a definite counter point in the face of Indian classical music. In Indian musical hierarchy, the Dhrupad form occupies the highest rank as a legacy from the Vedic period. The journey of Dhruba-geeti to Dhrupad and Dhrupad to Dhrupad takes place in about 1000 to 1200 years.

In its journey Dhrupad is tied up with Prabandha gayan. Prabandha -gayan is an umbrella term to describe a group of Indian classical and semi-classical music. The word Prabandha means a variety of musical components so bound together as to form a coherent whole. It comprises of the anga or the six characteristics of classical music and on the other hand, the four divisions of Dhatu; which are udgrah, melapak, dhruba and abhoga. The music which can satisfy any two anga or dhatu can come under the umbrella of prabandha. In the period of pilgrimage of Sankaradeva, prabandha was in the verge of extinction. Only Dhrupad flourished in places like Gwalior, Delhi, Vindhaban etc. and also Vaisnnavite movement was in its full motion. Sankaradeva may have been influenced by both aspects and the result was the existence of a new genre of music called Borgeet. Here we can observe a clean link where Sankaradeva came in to touch with Dhrupada. Scholars proved that Dhruba-geeti is the origin of all Indian classical music and with the following similarities Borgeet can be considered as a part of the race.

Application of Anga and Dhatu in Borgeet and Dhrupad

If someone observes by participating, then he/she may come to know the application of the six angas, the four dhatus and also the addition of other local musical flavor within Borgeet in order to enrich its quality and also for it to be acceptable by the native folk of Assam by Sankaradeva.

Raga - a combination of notes: The combination of several notes woven into a composition in a way which is pleasing to the ear is called Raga. Each Raga creates an atmosphere which is associated with feelings and sentiments. Any stray combination of notes cannot be called a Raga. All Dhrupada are practiced within a specific raga. Mel (Tha) or groups give birth to all ragas. Mother of Dhrupad and Borgeet is called ‘Mel’. In both musical style, Swar (notes) are aesthetically appealing. Here Aroha (ascending notes), Avaroha (descending notes), Raga Chaneki (flow or main combination of notes) etc complete its character. With the two immutable notes Sa and Pu and five other notes that have two states each, we get 12 notes in an octave.

The notes that have two states are:

1. 72x245
2. 72x245
3. 72x245
4. 72x245
5. 72x245

¹ South Asia Culture, History & Heritage 2015
In Indian classical music including i.e. Sa, Re, Ga, Ma, Pa, Dha, Ni, Re, Ga, Ma, Dha, Ni. Each and every Raga is composed with the help of these 12 notes 1. \text{That or } M\text{el i.e. a sequence of notes,}
2. \text{Jati or classification}
3. \text{King and Queen relation of notes, i.e. } Vadi \text{ and } Samavadi
4. \text{The ascent and descent of } Raga, \text{ i.e. } Aroha \text{ and } Avroha
5. \text{Raga Chaneki i.e. the smallest combination of notes depicting the } Raga,
6. \text{Saptak (octave): } mandra, madhya and taar
7. \text{Nibaddha and Anibaddh; without or with rhythm}
8. \text{Division of songs within a 24 hour time span.} Both \text{Dhrupad and Borgeets} are also allotted a particular time space in the cycle of the day. It is called the “Prahar’ of singing.

By comparing the name of raga used in \text{Dhrupad} with \text{Borgeet}, we find some similar names like Dhanashree, Ashowari, Basant, Gauri, Malhar, Shree, Kedar, Kalyan, Purvi, Sarang, Kanada, Bhupali, Kanud etc. Some of these are similar to the ancient art form of Assam like Oja-Pali, Charyageet, Geeti-Ramayan, Ushaparinay etc. The study establishes the influence of ancient Assamese music and \text{Dhrupad} in Sankaradeva’s musical assets. Analysis of swar (notes) used in raga shows a different picture of \text{Borgeet}. Each and every raga of Hindustani classical music contains some combination of notes, which is its identification mark. Any regular listener or performer can easily identify the raga in any language or without language. In the case of \text{Borgeet}, a very few raga can claim this quality. We observe some effects of raga used in \text{Dhrupad} like Dhanashree, Bilawal, Khamaj, Jaijayanti, Megh, Madhyamad-Sarang, Dhani, Kaft etc. Due to giving less importance in scale holder instrument for over hundreds of years, the notes came to be used haphazardly. The use of komal nishad is very common in \text{Borgeet} and on the other hand, the use of tivra madhyam is very rare. Some great work was done by an eminent Sankari scholar, ‘Golap Mahant’, who continuously tried to specify the raga.

\text{Dhrupad} were practiced in religious rituals and in temples in the ancient period. Similarly the rituals of Nama-Kirttana, whether coral or solo is invariably initiated with the singing of a \text{Borgeet}. The chief instrument played with \text{Borgeet} in \text{Satras} today are the \text{Khol and the } Taal. The \text{Khol} is a double-headed barrel shaped drum on which the \text{Taals} or the rhythmic compositions are played with both the hands. The \text{taal} played with the \text{Khol} to mark the strokes and gaps of a \text{taal}, comprises of two plates (cymbals) made of a compound metal called \text{kah} (bell-metal) fastened to the fingers of each hand with the help of jute strings drawn through a small hole in the bowl-shaped belly called \text{betu} of each plate. In singing \text{Dhrupad} the chief instruments are \text{Vee} and \text{Pakhuwaj}. It is very similar to \text{Khol} but smaller in size. \text{Dhrupad} probably evolved from the earlier chanting of \text{OM}, the sacred syllable which is claimed in \text{Hindu} as the source of all creation. \text{OM} is said to have a spiritually purifying effect on the person chanting it. Later, the rhythmic chanting of the \text{Vedic} scriptures evolved into singing of \text{Uchanda and Prabandha}, sometime in the first millennium. \text{Dhrupad} is said to have emerged from \text{Prabandha}. One significant characteristic of \text{Dhrupad} is the emphasis on maintaining the purity of the ragas and the swaras (notes). According to some accounts, \text{Dhrupad} was sung in temples, the singer facing the divinity. \text{Dhrupad} is characterised by the fact that during the same performance it changes a number of times. Generally the singer begins his performance in a slow tempo and later quickens it in stages. The acceleration in tempo is not in a continuum but in a ladder-like fashion. Each rung of the ladder represents acceleration in a multiple of two, three, four, 1,5,2,5,5/4,7/8 etc. Each change in \text{laya} produces a sort of an electrifying effect on audience. The compositions were prayers addressed to \text{Hindu} gods. As \text{Dhrupad} consists of prayers for all \text{Hindu} Dev-Devies, \text{Borgeet} addresses Lord Krishna and Rama. Many of \text{Borgeet} written by Madhabadeva are about child Krishna and his divine mischief. Later \text{Dhrupad} evolved into a highly sophisticated and complex musical form but still retaining its sacred character. The recital of \text{Borgeet} also maintains the notes of a highly reputed raga. In \text{Borgeet} we get two kinds of raga; one is called Bandha-raga and the other is called \text{Mela-raga}. \text{Tala} for \text{bandha raga} is fixed and its vister or elaboration of notes in the beginning is different from \text{mela-raga}. In \text{mela-raga} any kind of \text{tala} can be played and the number of \text{tala} used here is indefinite. The change in \text{laya} is also present in \text{Borgeet} but it is not in multiple ways. We can express it as a geometrical curve.

The analysis of language used in \text{Borgeet} and \text{Dhrupad}. Originally \text{Dhrupad} was written in Sanskrit. It was used as a part of entertainment in between the chanting of \text{Sam-Veda} and \text{Purana}. For example,
The language of composition also changed from Sanskrit to Brijbhasha, in between 12th and 16th centuries. A major part of the compositions being sung nowadays were written in the 16th century and later. The Brijbhasha, is basically Maithil. From 12th and the 16th centuries, it was the common language for North Indian literature. Dialects varied from place to place. In 1324, Ghyasuddin Tughluq, the emperor of Delhi invaded Mithila, defeated Harasimhadeva, entrusted Mithila to his family priest Kameshvar Jha, a Maithil Brahmin of the Oinvar family. From that time onwards Maithil came in to practice in Mathura-Vrindaban.

Another name of Mathura-Vrindaban is Brajadham. So Maithil was renamed Brijbhasha. But the disturbed era did not produce any literature in Maithili until Vidyapati Thakur (1360 to 1450), who was an epoch-making poet under the patronage of King Shiva Simha and his queen Lakhima Devi. He produced over 1,000 immortal songs in Maithili on the theme of erotic sports of Radhaand Krishna. Brajavali was a literary language used by Sankaradeva for his compositions and Borgeets was with an old Assamese dialect. Though similar languages were used in the Vaishnavite contexts in Odisa and Bengal, all these were based on Maithili. In general, the vocable and idiomatic expressions of Brajavali were local (Assamese), while the inflectional forms were Maithili, which was easily understood by the people of Assam and the people of North India, because it carried the flavor of Brajbhasa. Thus it became the language of choice of the Bhakti poets. Here are examples of both poetic styles.

1. Borgeet

Dhrung:
Re sui gopala piyaru
Meri prana adharu  I
Madhupuri rahe dahe jeeu hamaru II

Pada:
Gokulaka manika kanu nabanidhi I
Haate haral nika rana banka bidhi II
Chanda bine rayani sajani kisu nuhe I

2. Dhrupad

Dhrung:
Jaah udhi tabla madhupura hei, tuhe takana murari II

Pada:
Hare ita se dhani thira, abatina bhubana agura I
Puni kye dasrashana paava,aba muhe ina dakhaha jaawa II
Bidyapati tabla gama dekhaha aan II

From the above displayed lyrics it is clear that the “sthayi” of both poetic styles are the same and are known as dhrung. By reading these poetic pieces, one can come to the conclusion that the theme and language of literature for both genres of music are the same. One more common thing in both musical genres is having an association with different dance forms. The dance form associated with Borgeet is called Sattriya dance and Dhrupad was used in many dance forms in the ancient time and sometimes it is used in Kathak dance and some other semi-classical dance form of India.

Conclusion

Dhrupad is accepted as the oldest existing form of Indian classical music. The origin of this genre is linked to the recitation of Sama Veda, the sacred Sanskrit text. In comparison to Dhrupad, Borgeet came into existence after a long time but both genres have similar characteristics in respect to the language and the style of singing. Both styles of music are sung in the praise of God. Both are practiced in different rhythmic variations. Dhrupad is accepted as the oldest classical music form of India. So with all the similar characteristics, Borgeet should be recognised as a genre of classical music. The government of India and all the established vocal artists of classical music should promote and take interest in this music form that is Borgeet. Only then it will be alive and students should be encouraged to study this musical form, otherwise it will lose with time.

References

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Hari bine birinda bipina nahi shahe II

Jaah udhi tabla madhupura hei, tuhe takana murari II