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Tappa It's origine and development

An analytical Study

Dr. Ranjana Saxena

This semi classical style of singing is referred to as Tappa by the Hindi speaking region, pronounced as Toppa in Bengal and Tappe in Punjabi language. The word Tappa derived from the Punjabi word Tappana meaning bouncing, swinging, jumping and hopping etc. There is no dispute regarding its meaning because people are well acquainted with its leaping, hopping, bouncing and swinging or moving up and down style.

In Punjab, songs sung by people while driving their camels or pulling them with jerks on uneven roads are called Tappe. There is sufficient reason to believe that Shori Miyan only improvised zamzama taans in Tappas after borrowing the same from the people carrying goods and chattels on their camels back. When the camel moves, the rider on its back is bound to face jerks and suppleness in his journey and while singing automatically these jerks and unsmooth pushes were naturally evident in their songs which formed an integral part of a Tappa as one of its main characteristics

We come to a finding from two facts, that the movement of Tappas is ambulatory and not straight forward. Sapat tanas are rarely taken and pause or nyas on any swara is totally alien to Tappas. The composer of Tappas, Shori Mian's father Ghulam Rasool Khan was a famous musician of his time and tradition. He was the contemporary of great musicians Sadarang and Adarang, the pioneers of Khayal gayaki though they used to sing Dhruvpads themselves. Ghulam Rasul Khan, a Dhruvpad singer embellished his Dhruvpad gayaki with small tanas of Quwwali and created a specific style of his own. He gave his son Ghulam Nabi freedom to adopt a novel style of his own for singing.

But there is diverse opinion about it. According to some scholars Gulam Nabi composed special tanas which he applied in his traditional Khayal and Dhruvpad gayakis. This resented his father Ghulam Rasool Khan who gave his son a piece of his mind for flouting the norms and rules of traditional music which finally led Ghulam Nabi, the son, to flee home.

Having travelled to various places he was deeply influenced by the folk music of Punjab after he reached there. He utilized the uniqueness and special aspects and characteristics of his own voice and finally composed the Tappas.

Another group of scholars opine that Ghulam Rasool Khan instilled into his son Ghulam Nabi such a musical personality that the latter was able to transform the form of Khayal into a concrete shape leading to the creation of Tappa style of Music.

Ghulam Rasool's search to innovate and create something new was due to his extraordinary creative genius and it was inherited by his son Ghulam Nabi. In his compositions Ghulam Nabi used his pseudo name as Shori Mian. Shori Mian took his Dhruvpad training from his father because of which his voice was powerful but shrill. He was very much influenced with Quwwali of Quwwal bachche. He utilized short, complicated and crooked tans from Quwwali in his music. He used to wonderstruck the audience with his extraordinary tan patterns in musical soirees. He was not satisfied with the flexibility of his voice and therefore constantly was on the run to create a tan dominated style of Music.

While wandering through the lands of the Punjab, Shori Mian came across the love songs of Heer-Ranjha sung by the traders on their camels' backs. The short circuitous tanas of the Punjabi songs, distorted and interrupted, caused by jolts, jerks and bounces due to camel rides got etched into his mind. He did exhaustive experiments with all the elements of the said songs and developed them to such an extent that he created his own style which gradually earned the reputation of a semi classical category of vocal music.

It is difficult to adopt Tappa style of singing for a normal Khyal singer because Dhruvpad, Khyal and Tappa all the three styles are different from each other as elaboration of swaras is unique in them and all the three forms have their respective tempos. For emotional expression in Tappa gayaki short circuitous zamzama Tanas are demonstrated with accuracy and perfection. The Tanas in Tappas are much more curved than that of Kayals. In an ongoing Khayal recital in the midst of imagination sometimes the Sapat Tanas can be observed by the vocalist but in Tappas the Tanas are short and speedy. To give a concrete shape to the imagination of the of the camel riders singing this style of music is presented with accuracy and least time frame. Two salient features of this style of singing are its uninterrupted flow and accuracy with speed.

A few scholars hold the view that the style of Tappa has evolved from the Besara Geet of Dhruvpad. It is accepted that the Prabandha has six divisions namely

1. Swara
2. Viruda
3. Pada
4. Tena
5. Pata
6. Tala

However some relaxations have taken place in Dhruvpad Gayaki later on because instead of six stanzas only four stanzas remained in vogue namely-

1. Sthayi
2. Antara
3. Sanchari
4. Abhog

In the later years this was further simplified as Dhruvpad was confined to only Sthayi and Antara. Like this, initially Bandish composed for Khayal had almost four cycles or Avartanas.

It can be said that the more a bandish experiences cycles or avartanas the more the Swaras ideal or appropriate for the raga can be applied leading to the expression of its significant phrases.

Shori Mian has made the outer structure of his Bandish (composition) very subtle. The style of singing Tappa is so agile and complicated that it is impossible to render the Tanas suitable for elaborate bandishes.

This brevity became a special feature of Tappa. Each of Sthayi and Antara is completed within a single cycle.

In Khayal gayaki an edifice of various kinds of swaras is created which is impossible in superfast Tappa Gayaki. In Khayal each Swara from its scratch is ornated and aesthetically presented it but in Tappa the true nature or form of the raga is expressed only by application of the embellishment of the Tanas.

Tappa in initial stage

When man was born on earth joy and woe became his natural companion. Having nurtured in the lap of nature the human race expressed its heartfelt emotions through songs. The folk songs effuse human feelings like hopes-disappointments, likes-dislikes, happiness- unhappiness love-languishment, attraction-exclusion. The basic instincts of any human life are well perceived through these expressions and the desires, enthusiasm, exhilaration, love and the like feelings enumerated in the said folk songs transcend all the barriers of social taboos of a human being.

The first and foremost feature of folk music is its unconventional way of thinking, spontaneity in Swaras and talas. In folk music the treatment of Swaras is simple and the scope of swar vistara is also limited.

“Any song originating among the people and traditionally handed down by them”

Chambers Dictionary

Meaning-

Folk music originates from the ordinary people of a particular region which is acquired by the following generation. Again in a rotational way the subsequent generations also imbibe it from their ancestors. This is how the tradition of folk music survived from generation wise.

In folk music there are certain songs in which mostly the elements of classical music are found. In this way folk songs acted as a bridge between the folk and classical music. The tune and Swara applications in folk music are very simple. From the point of view of its language the texts are also simple. Most of the themes are marriage and young boy-girl love oriented.

Today, having been colourful with the hue of classical music the complicated, difficult and miraculous singing style of Tappa in its initial form was practically famous in the land of Punjab as folk music. Tappa earned its semi classical status due to the tireless efforts of Shori Mia.

Tappa as a Folk Song

The language used in Tappa in the shape of folk music is colloquial. It describes from head to toe, the meeting of lovers, expression of languishment, jokes, humourous irony, entertainments and recreations. These Tappas are sung on a specially composed tune. Glimpses of classical music are also felt in them. The main ragas are Bhairavi, Kafi, Pahari and Mand. Punjabi folk poetry can be understood as-

Punjabi Folk Song

Veer ras poetry

Love songs

Tappa Mahia Dhola

In modern Punjab some folk tunes are prevalent which are referred to as Tappas. In fact the nature of semi classical Tappas is in sharp contradiction with those of the folk tunes. These folk tunes are very plain and simple and most of them are rendered during the auspicious occasions of marriages. These Tappas are totally different from the songs sung by the Camel riders.

Before the enrichment of Tappas to the height of semi classical music is studied, will it be proper and justified to make this point clear regarding the exact period when tappas gained the status as semi classical music?

Shree Gokul Nath Ji, grandson of Shri Vallabhacharya Ji wrote a famous book in Braj Bhasha titled as “Chaurasi Vashnavan ki Varta” wherein he portrayed a entertaining scene. He writes that “at the market place in Agra a nautch girl used to dance. Khayals and Tappas were sung and a crowd was gathered. All the people stood and watched the dance. Krishna Das also stood to see the dance.”

It is acknowledged that Swami Vallabhacharya Ji belonged to the 16th century. It's significance is that in the 16th century Tappas or Tappa Khayal compositions were very popular. It is difficult to presume in which forms the Tappas and Tappkhayals were and how much they differed from Shori Mia's compositions with zamzama tanas.

Musicologist Fakirullah connected with the description of the Dynasties of Shahjahan and Aurangzeb has mentioned in his treatise “Raag Darpan” that in Lahore famous love songs were known as Tappas. His contemporary writer Mirza Khan has mentioned the love songs as Dapa in his work Tuhepatul Hind. The name Dapa is unheard of in Punjab but all its characteristics are identical.

At that time some texts are available wherein we come across the word ‘Tappa’. From this it can be assumed that Tappa and Dapa had common elements from the point of view of its style of singing. From the tradition of the vocalists succeeded by Shori Mian we can get an idea about Tappas of the present time but it is difficult to comprehend the style of singing Tappas from 16th to 18th centuries.

The predecessors of Shori Mia, Sadarang and Adarang composed Tappas with a very limited number of zamzama Tanas. Quwwal Bachchon Ka Gharana of Lucknow were mainly ornamented by three types of Tanas namely Funday Ki Tanas, Gamak ki Tanas and ChhootKiTanas which can be heard sometimes in

Tappas also. Having witnessed Tappa compositions by Sada Rang and Ada Rang it is evident Tappas were common at that time also.

Shori Mian's father had a prolonged stay in Lucknow. In his style of singing or gayaki the Quwwal Bachchon Ka Gharana tanas were present. These tanas can be noticed in Shori Mian's Tappa gayaki.

Development of Tappas in different regions and differences between them

Punjab State

Being a land of five burbling holy rivers with unlimited water flow the province of Punjab in the north-west of India is reputed for its glide, stillness, hard work and pigmentation. The young laborious farmers with tall physique and the women throughout their lives Keep listening to the sweet folk music.

There is an adage about Punjab- "Punjab diyan jammiyan noo nitt muhimma" it means in order to live it's inhabitants have accustomed themselves to dance, sing struggle and hum the tunes. The folk tunes of Punjabi folk songs are enthralling for their Symphony and rhythmic tempos.

The region of Punjab has earned great name and fame in Indian classical music. The weaving of rhythmic patterns in Tappa style is not only incomparable in the history of Indian music but in the history of international music.

After returning from Punjab Shori Mian stayed in Lucknow. In the court of the then Nawab of Lucknow, Nawab Asifuddoullah, he was honoured greatly. In Lucknow he imparted exhaustive tappa training on his disciple Gamun Mia or Gammu Khan. His son Shaadi Khan was an established singer in the court of Raja Udit Narayan Singh, the king of Benaras. The tappa singers learnt Tappas from Shori Mian, Gamun Mia and Shaadi Khan and they settled in Lucknow, Rampur, Gwalior, Chhapara, Cooch Bihar and other places. These singers gave Tappa training to some of their able students. At this time Mia Sarashar composed Tappas alike Shori Mia's.

In Punjab the singers did not give attention to enrich Tappa. The pillar of the music world Pt Dilip Chand Bedi said that his mentor or Sangeet guru Pandit Uttam Singh ji used to sing tappas very well. Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali Khan and his son Munawwar Ali Khan utilised Tappa Tanas during their Thumri recitals. Shori Mian innovated tappas in the region of Punjab and its literary value is also in Punjabi language but in Punjab flourishing of Tappas became comparatively less due to Shori Mian's permanent settlement in Lucknow.

Development of Tappas in Bengal

In Bengal during the time of Rabindranath Tagore Kali Mirza, Khshetra Mohan Goswami, Kalipada Pathak and others had knowledge in Tappas. Ram Nidhi Gupta learnt tappas in Chhapra and came to Bengal and composed many Tappas to promote and spread this type music. He composed Tappas in Bengali language and the novelty of application of Swaras and tunes coupled with short zamzama tanas attracted the audience of Bengal greatly.

In Bengal the genre narrative folklores or “Panchalis” were bound by well-defined talas and they were rendered in slow tempos but in Bengal the tappas were bound with medium tempo in order to make the job easy and people were very much influenced by Tappas because of its Tanas and and infusion of the fast Tanas with the voice.

Tappa Khayals and Tappas got exposure in Bengal in the first half of the 18th century. Kavi Ranjan Prasad Sen, Ram Nidhi Gupta (popularly known as Nidhu Babu and Bharat Chandra were famous Tappa singers who introduced a new style in order to popularize this music to the general public. Specially Nidhu Babu brought a change in the classical music of Bengal by adding a special structure to it. He composed many Tappas.

The language used in Tappas for common people about general subjects made them so widely popular that the special Tanas of Tappa anga were successfully adopted into Shyama Sangit, polli giti, Baul songs, Purotoni songs, Panchali and many other songs.

We find that the greatest poet Rabindra Nath Tagore also applied aesthetically Tanas conducive to Tappas in his Rabindra Sangeet.

In Undivided Bengal Chandan Nagar, Shri Rampur, Chinsura, Uttarpada, Nadia, Krishna Nagar, Naitaur, Mymensingh, Gouripur, Kolkata and Bishnupur Tappas were propagated immensely. Rabindra Nath Tagore was highly influenced by the Punjabi Tappas of Shori Mia. He himself admitted that he incorporated those Swaras which are conducive to the expression of feelings into his literary text.

His Songs didn't resemble Tappa completely. Each of them has irregular applications of zamzama tanas. Moreover each and every word of the text of the song was pronounced and sung clearly to make it meaningful. Rabindra Nath didn't ornate his compositions sufficiently with Gitkaris and Murkis

Shori Mia's Tappas are mainly adornment oriented. The words used therein are distorted & interrupted thereby lacking emotions & unabling the listeners to understand the meaning. Tagore gave equal importance to the the literary texts, Swaras & emotional Expressions in his Tappa based songs and maintained an individual style of his own. Rabindra Nath with his skill and maturity embellished his Tappa

compositions with Alankars in a controlled and restrained way and thus created a new horizon in Rabindra Sangeet with respect to his Tappa creations

Maharashtra

Maharashtra is famous for stage acting. In its Natya sangeet and Lavani, tanas pertinent to Tappa style are sung.

Madhya Pradesh

From the angle of propagation, Madhya Pradesh produced maximum number of vocalists who decided to take mandatory Tappa Talim. From the tradition of Ustad Nisar Hussain Khan and Pandit Laxman Krishna Rao Pandit of Gwalior Gharana each of them had expertise of eight to ten tappas. In fact Shori Miya was the singer of Quwwal Bachchon ka Gharana of Lucknow, His father settled down permanently in Gwalior. The predecessors of Gwalior Gharana accepted Shori Miya as one of them.

The pioneers of Gwalior Gharana namely Sri Raja Bhaiya Poochwale and Sri Krishna Rao Pandit were definite Tappa singers. To train up the voices of their disciples they used to make them practice zamzama tanas of Tappa relentlessly.

Uttar Pradesh

Shori Miyan lived in Lucknow, capital of Uttar Pradesh for long time. Nawab of Lucknow had a great respect to Shori Miyan.

After learning the Tappa gayaki from shori Miya his disciple Gamun Miyan went to Banaras where he taught the art of Tappa to two females namely, Shyama and Chitra Bandis. This is how the skill of singing Tappas reached the ladies of the evening also.

Subsequently Badi Moti Bai, Bangari Bai, Rasoolan Bai, Siddheshwari Devi, Girija Devi and others achieved command over this hard and pains taking style of vocal music. Pandit Bhola Nath Bhatta Ji of Allahabad, UP, had a priceless treasure of hundred Tappas. Another Pandit of Allahabad Pandit Ganesh Prasad Mishra had a precious collection of Tappas. In Rampur, U.P. also the vocalists appreciated and encouraged Tappa Gaiyaki. There was a singer called Buniyaad Hussain who lived here. It is said that he learnt Tappas from Ashraf Khan, the adopted son of Shori Mian.

Bihar

In the province of Bihar there was a celebrated Tappa singer of Gaya by the name of Pt. Ram Prasad Mishra. He was a Doyen of Thumris also & popularly known as Ramuji. He was in the habit of bringing wonder and miracle during singing the Punjabi Tappas. The flexibility, agility, superfast Laya and cheerfulness thrilled, excited and exhilarated the audience. His worthy son Shree Gowardhan Mishra sings tappas still now.

In addition to the aforesaid places there are male and female vocalists in Delhi and Rajasthan who learnt tappas from outside their states and settled down in different places to earn their livelihood.

The Tappas that are available to us we find that the languages used therein are Punjabi, Hindi and Bengali. On the basis of this we can make a study of one another. We get some Tappas from a book written by Pandit Vishnu Digambar Paluskar.

Those Tappas are written with Vishnu Digambar Paluskar notation in which Chhaya lagatwa Bhairavi, Sindhu Bhairavi, Jhinjhoti, Kanhare ki Bahar etc Ragas are applied aesthetically. Paluskar's some Tappas are based on the devotion for Lord Rama and Lord Krishna and song are connected with love also as for example:-

Sanvariya raho ravare ho

kanha aa ye murali vale

ya ve sanvariya raho

prem umagi jumaga

bhali nike benu baja

aap ho murali vale ya ve.

and

Baithi saguna manavata Mata

This is a famous composition of Poet Tulsi Das. Most of the Tappas written by Shori Mian are in Multani, Punjabi language. They are replete with Arbi, Farsi and Urdu words like jigar, nazara, ishqu etc.

Tappas have developed in various parts of India but Tappas created by Shori Miya, Sarshar, Humdum and Sada Rang-Ada Rang are widely spread In all parts of India.

Whether the practice of Punjabi Tappas became rampant in U.P. Or M.P. Bihar or Rajasthan, it is a fact the Gwalior gharana slackened it's speed into vilambit Laya and there after brought them to an advantageous position because along with the zamzama tanas, slides or meends, sapat tanas could be demonstrated. Together with this Benaras, Allahabad and Gaya singers used to present Tappas based on difficult ragas like Patmanjari, Lalit, Jaijaiwanti etc. Miraculously 5/4, 3/2, 9/4 matras or units of tala were given force and arrival at Sam wondrously were adopted by them which was extremely difficult to achieve

Nidhu Babu's Tappas and it's literary values

Literature-

The language used here is Bangla. Many Sanskrit words are used to make it much superior in quality and brought a difference between these and Shori Miya's Punjabi Tappas. English translation of one such Tappa is as follows -

“With a lotus face, why are you so impatient like a restive deer? It seems to me that the good effect of resemblance makes your eyes look like that of a deer's. The one, whom you are thinking about day and

night belongs to you only, you are without any reason suspecting him, to see you in pain, I also become sad.”

The lofty emotional expression In this ideal literature is worth demonstrating. Few Tappas depict languished heroine’s beauty and her languishment

like-

1.

“It is raining heavily and clouds are thundering, when time has come to bring an end to the languishment, it’s fire gets wilder”.

2.

“Restive eyes why are you getting so restless one can always win your heart. The glistening moonlit night looks like scattered pearls throughout, be cheerful don’t feel sad without any reason for delayed arrival of your lover”.

We come to know about worldly love in this literature but it is far superior than Punjabi Tappas.

Application of Ragas-

Shri. Rajeshwar Mitra reduced Nidhu Babu’s Tappas to writing in Bengali. Ragas namely Khamaj, Bhairavi, Malhar, Desh, Kalingra, Jaunpuri, Sohini and Pilu etc were taken into account. There are differences between Hindi and Bangla Tappas with respect to the selection and choosing of Ragas also.

Application of Tala-

Most of Nidhu babu’s Tappas are Tri Taal and Ek Taal bound.

About Tanas-

zamazama Tanas were not used in plenty.

The reason may perhaps depend on the magnitude of the composer’s versatile voice throwing capacity. Any composer composes that which goes well with his voice or might be, like Ravi babu, Nidhu babu also felt that dominance of Tanas would hinder the emotions. Nidhu babu also utilized Tanas and swaras in such a way that the emotions and feelings were reigned supreme.

Language-

Nidhu babu composed all his Tappas in Bengali. The language is also of a supreme standard and replete with words pertaining to literature. If a poet sings, his singing elevates the poem’s aesthetics more and more. The compositions with Tappa resemblances are idiomatic expressions in chaste Bengali involving Sanskrit words.

Examples are Chandranone “Chandranan”, Purno shoshi (purn Chandra) here, to explain the beauty a face, it’s used metaphorically with special emphasis to Sanskrit. (sadrishyo) similarity, (trisha) thirst, (mukta) Pearl, (bhroo bhongo bhangima) deer like eyebrows, (ogon) fire,(matri bhasha) mother tongue etc.

Many Sanskrit words have been used by which it is understood that the poet had language at his good command.

The excellence of emotions In Tappas

The excellence of emotions In Tappas is not only created in the backdrop of the tryst of lovers and favourites and languishment but patriotism and love for mother tongue also draws attention.

Like

Sthayi-

Nanan deshe nanan bhasha

Bineswadeshiyo bhasha poore ki asha.

There are various countries, various languages but I can express my feelings and thoughts only through my mother tongue.

Antara-

Kouto nodi shourobor ki ba koul chatokir

Dhara joul bine ki bhoo ghooche ki trisha.

There are many rivers and lakes but the skylark drinks only a drop of water which falls from The Swati Constellation to quench it's thirst.

Tappas in Rabindra sangeet

Rabindranath has used some of the tanas similar to tappas in his puja and nature oriented songs. In these compositions we come across the Ragas like Jaijwanti and Bilawal. Ravi Babu composed Tappas set to Madhyman (medium tempo) and Ada Theka (Punjabi tala is called Ada Theka because of its skewed or off beat Laya). In these compositions there are blendings of Sanskrit and Bengali languages.

Ravindra Nath Ji furnished a line of one of his songs with Tanas only. This partly Tappa like song is based on Raga Jaijaiwanti and set to Ektaal.

“Jiboun joukhun shukiye jaye”

Tagore's language, literature & categories cross all the barriers of human evaluation. To judge his literary genius will be as good as showing the Sun an oil lamp. One of his famous composition is:-

“Ami roope tomaye bholabo na,

Bhalobashay bholabo,

Ami hath diye dar kholabo na go,

Gan diye dar kholabo.

Bholabo na bhushon bhare,

Shakhabo na phooler hare,

Prem ke amar mala koure,

Goulay tomar dolabo.

I will not infatuate you by my beauty.I will mould you by my love.Will open the door not with my hand but with my music Will not impress you with my Jewelleries & loading a floral garland on you My garland of love will be displayed on you.No one will be able to make out which turbulent waves of the the thunderstorm are causing my heart to exalt.

In this way in the background of platonic Love other compositions were also created in which pure and unconditional love are described in many forms with a comparatively lesser number of love stories relating to physical pleasures and voluptuousness

Parallely, an example of Shori Mia's Tappa is cited

Rag Kafi –Taal Punjabi

Sthayee-

Bol suna jani sainyan re,

Sanu mande, jande phande re.

Antara

Sar fana vich alam vekha,

Suno Shori gale phande jande phande re.

Which means-

Oh ! Beloved, I am honey trapped with your love. Make me hear you. The world will witness chopping my head off. Listen Shori, my neck is caught into the noose of love.

Most of his Tappas Shori Mian described separation from his sweetheart. Mian Sarshar and Humdam followed suit mainly by incorporating romanticism into their Tappas.