



A study on challenges to hold on to the 'Guru-Shishya Parampara' in Hindustani vocal music in today's modern era

Santosh Kumar Panda

Faculty Associate, Sri Sri University, Godisahi, Odisha, India

Abstract

This research paper is an attempt to test and investigate 'why is that Guru-Shishya Parampara' in Hindustani vocal music in today's modern era is dying'? It is the music lovers with long helpless moan are witnessing and debating with great concerns and agreeing upon the slow death of old model of 'Guru-Shishya Parampara' practiced to preach and train students in Hindustani vocal music with the argument to craft new formats of 'Guru-Shishya Parampara' to save the art of music. The Gharana' is considered to be a traditional approach and system of teaching and performing Indian classical music are the perfect example to show case the 'Guru-Shishya Parampara'. There are many Gharana-s or styles, prominent ones are the Mewati, Jaipur, Agra, Benaras, Gwalior. This style of Gharana' is many century old method practiced in India has been passed from master to student, from generation to generation. These prominent Gharanas has a rich history of supporting disciples while they learnt music in the homes of their teachers. Over the years, these Gharanas has produced many outstanding vocal, instrumental and dance performers. But, like many traditions, and cultural heritage in general, this method of performing music has been threatened due to various reasons. This research article is an attempt to search the factual reasons for closure of many Gharanas. This research article has been carried out to search in minute details with scientific approach, what are the reasons that led the century old practices to take its last breath disturbing the 'Guru-Shishya Parampara' practiced. The objective of this research paper to highlight the challenges these Gharanas are facing with special emphasis on solutions to come out of this precarious situation.

Keywords: Gharana, Guru-Shishya Parampara, traditions, cultural heritage, vocal

1. Introduction

The mentor-pupil tradition i.e. Guru-Shishya Parampara in India is an ancient and primordial, yet lasting till today as it is an enduring one. Hindu tradition and culture reflects it with the celebration of Guru Purnima in India and Nepal in the full moon night of Aashadha, as per the Saka calendar. India in 2017 celebrated this festival, which fall on July 19 this year. This festival is important in Hindu, Buddhist and Jain traditions as an opportunity for expressing gratitude to that revere as our Guru or Mentor. India has had witnessed many idealistic teacher-student pairs in its long glorious history. Some of the prominent names that reflects this Parampara are, Dronacharya - Arjuna in Mahabharata time, Dhaumya - Aruni, Chanakya - Chandragupta Maurya, Swami Haridas and Muhammad Ghaus - Tansen, Samarth Ramdas - Shivaji Maharaj, Ramakrishna Paramhansa - Swami Vivekananda etc. this sacred tradition is also reflected in Modern Indian Hindustani classical music too. The recent example is the Guru-Shishya relationship between Shrinivas Khale and Shankar Mahadevan, An acclaimed composer in his own right, Shrinivas Khale tutored his star pupil, singer-composer Shankar Mahadevan from a young age to achieve the greatest heights that Shankar Mahadevan experiences today.

2. Gurusisya Parampara in Indian context

The brightest feature of Indian culture is its tradition of holy and ever deepening tie of soul kinship between Guru and

Shishya. It is through this spiritual medium of teacher-disciple bond between Guru and Shishya that India once upon a time lifted up to the position of Jagatguru i.e. Teacher of the world. As time passes this tradition of teacher-disciple relationship gave birth to Upanishads. The word Upanishad is spelt as 'Upa nishad'; which means to sit near and to listen - to absorb. In this Parampara or tradition it is required for a shishya to be more attentive disciple who has to listen to the teachings and experiences of his spiritual master, assimilated them and then briefly and succinctly recorded them systematically in the form of unique scriptures called Upanishads.

The lines of Hindi verse "Guru bin gyan nahin re nahin re; Guru bin jivan aisa hota, jaise pran nahin re nahin re" better describes how blessed and exalted is a person who has attained the immediacy of Guru, his blessings and subtle protection this Hindi verse can very well translated as; "Spiritual knowledge cannot be attained without the help of the Guru. Life without Guru is like a body without life-breath". In India, guru has all the power to select his own shishya from the ancient times, since serving the humanity was the core issue with the teacher or guru the responsibility of selecting the right disciples followed by removing their darkness of ignorance and leading them to accomplish salvation. One can effortlessly understand how vital it is to re-establish this revered tradition of Guru- Shishya under the present circumstances when Jivan Vidya has almost disappeared and vanished.

3. Literature review on Guru-Shishya Parampara' in Hindustani vocal music

Krishna Natarajan, is founder of Rageshri foundation is a classical example of Guru-Shishya Parampara. An engineer and a management graduate of reputed IIM, Krishna Natarajan today is known for his engrossing performances in Hindustani Vocal across India. His khayal singing has been praised for its traditional and systematic elaboration of the Raga and expression of deep emotional content. At present Krishna Natarajan continues his quest and study of Hindustani Vocal under the veteran and renowned Vocalist of the Agra-Gwalior Gharana Pandit Arun Kashalkar and his study of Violin under Guru Shanta Balasubramanian. This aspect of Krishna Natarajan establishes the importance of Guru-Shishya Parampara' in Hindustani vocal music.

T. G. Vaidyanathan an Indian scholar in 1989 pointed out that, the bond between a master (guru) and a disciple (shishya) is particularly significant in the training of the arts in India. Underpinning both of India's classical music traditions for centuries, Guru-Shishya-Parampara has enabled the intricacies of both the Hindustani and Karnatic forms to be passed orally from teacher to student for generations. Traditionally, in a system known as gurukulavasam (ibid.: 359), the shishya becomes a member of the guru's household. Regarded as part of the family, provided with food and clothing, the shishya is assimilated into the guru's schedule. Ranked higher than biological parent, a metaphysical entity representing God and both parents, the guru assumes ultimate authority, in part predicated upon the shishya's devotion and total obedience. As the guru "lives, eats, breathes and sleeps music" (Neuman 1990: 54), so the shishya imbibes the atmosphere of the art, inadvertently internalizing both musical knowledge and a broader foundation of contextual information. With "no separation between a 'teacher' and a 'curriculum' to be taught" (Weidman 2006: 276), the shishya learns by emulating the guru, "by becoming absorbed in him or her."

With no distinction made between "life" and "music," the traditional gurukulavasam provides a social context for two modes of transmission, cognitive and cultural (Booth 1996), in which behaviors and customs necessary for oral/aural learning processes are supported and validated. At the beginning of the twentieth century, keen to emphasize the commensurability of Indian and Western classical music but also wanting to distinguish that which set the Indian tradition apart from its Western counterpart which highlights both the primacy of the voice and the oral/aural nature of musical transmission. Against this background, in a post-colonial discourse dominated by concerns of authenticity and fidelity to "tradition," heightened by a perceived threat of new technologies (Weidman 2003), Guru-Shishya-Parampara remains a potent contemporary issue for Indian musicians and for their rasikas (discerning listeners, connoisseurs of music). According to Ranade, "GSP [Guru-Shishya-Parampara]... has become a charged entity, providing a sure sign of its cultural status.... Indians have a psychological complex about it!" (1998: 39).

4. Challenges facted by the gurusisya Parampara in Hindustani vocal music

The observation into the deterioration of Guru-Shishya

Parampara unearths some of the limited but prominent issues, they are as follows;

1. Western Educational effect in the learning of music.
2. Trust deficit in the disciple.
3. Youths are moving towards job oriented programmes.
4. Lack of passion for classical music.
5. Lack of glamour and lack of TV reality shows on classical music.
6. Lack of use of classical music in Hindi Bolliwood Industry.
7. Guru's inability to provide lodging and fooding facility to their disciples due to their financial ill health.

5. Scope for further research and conclusion

This article is an attempt to highlight the Guru-Shishya Parampara that exists in Indian Hindustani Vocal music. There is strong need for further research in this field to test above mentioned challenges. The government and the corporate houses can also contribute to revive the ancient Indian system of learning. The government from both the center as well as state should take feasible steps in funding the gharanas who run under Guru-Shishya Parampara system. Apart from that the government should extend financial support to the seasoned gurus as well as the deserving disciples need to be given scholarship to learn Hindustani Vocal Music.

6. References

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