Chapter – I

Introduction

1.1.0. Introduction

Language and Music are closely related as language forms the basis for music especially in case of songs which are texts having the linguistic form. A musical text is usually a metrical text set to music. Thus it has three different levels –

i) the level of language,
ii) the level of metre, and,
iii) the level of melody.

In the present study, Modern Bengali Songs (henceforth MBS) have been analysed in terms of these three levels. In addition the structure of the form and content of MBS has also been dealt with.

1.2.0. Linguistics and Music

Several musicians have thought, as R. Monelle (Asher 1994 : 2635) states that language has formed the basis for musical structure. But there has been little systematic research in this area. However, there have been studies of music from the linguistic point of view (Asher 1994 : 2643-2654).

F. de. Saussure was the first linguist whose view that the science of language might be extended to systems other than language and called ‘Semiologie’, was found to be very useful for the musicians.

Jean – Jacques Nattiez made the first definitive application of linguistic method to music. It was from the viewpoint of distributional linguistics. He separated the musical act into three levels – ‘poietic’, ‘aesthetic’ and ‘neutral’. The poietic level is that on which the music is made, the level of composition and performance. Aesthetic level is the level of listening. The third level brought these ideas together, which says, music is merely ‘an object’. It is a material which is subjected to a form.

Following the distributional analysis of Z.S.Harris, N.Ruwet proposed a program for the distributional analysis of music. He followed Levi-Strauss. He tabulated music in such a way, so that music may be read continuously in the usual manner, but repeated passages are arranged vertically below each other.
J-J. Nattiez made an attempt to adapt Ruwet's methods. He made his analysis based on the 'variables' rather than 'musical units'. Nattiez identified the units which differ from each other instead of those which resemble each other.

The theories of Chomsky were applied fruitfully in the analysis of music. The Charles Eliot Norton Lectures given by Leonard Bernstein at Harvard in 1973, made many interested in the generative approach to music. "In music the term 'transformation' usually means the development and fragmentation of motives................. Just as a series of linguistic expressions can be conflated into one expression by the process of deletion, so a musical phrase can derive from several source-phrases by a similar process. Such deletion can introduce ambiguity into music, as it can in language" (Asher 1994 : 2646). Bernstein also says that metaphor is a kind of transformation. The preceding phrase makes sense for the subsequent phrase because it resembles it like a metaphor or it is desired by the process of deletion.

Following generative principles Allan R. Keiler handled the harmonic device of Western music including modulation. Perlman and Greenblatt described Jazz Improvisation as a Generative process. The grammar of Lerdahl and Jackendoff is an 'analytical' grammar. Following them J. Sundberg and B. Lindblom have produced a grammar for swedish nursery tunes, which can generate new material. It is to be noted that Transformational and Generative grammars have also been successfully used in ethnomusicology.

In this connection, it is to be mentioned that some works have been done in Indian classical music too. Robin Cooper describes the scales within which ragas are framed, showing that they may be generated by applying rules. The scales of Indian music are called 'thatas'. Each raga is framed within a particular thata. Thatas and ragas are definitely paradigmatic, features of langue rather than parole. Classical music is an improvised form resembling spoken language whereas western music is a written repertoire. The improvisatory nature of classical music resembles linguistic performance.

There is another study dealing with Indian classical music. Harold Powers uses the taxonomy of John Lyons in his work on music in Banaras. His description of Indian classical music was based on the structural Semantics of John Lyons. Vida Chenoweth's generative study of the songs of New Guinea is a venture in ethnomusicology.
Judith and Alton Becker made the most complex of all generative studies in ethnomusicology. They are both musician and linguist respectively like Lerdahl and Jackendoff. They present a grammar for the Javanese gamelan genre called ‘Srepegan’. This simple kind of monody accompanies the puppet theatre. J. Greimas chiefly shows that meaning is dependent on context. “In fact, the importance of context in interpreting music is greater than that it is in language: almost all of the meaning of music depends on context,” (Asher 1994: 2650). Greimas’s theories show a deductive side (semeanalysis) and an inductive side (the narrative grammar). The inductive side of Greimas’s theory was applied to music by the Finnish scholar Eero Tarasti. In this area three categories viz., spatiality, temporality and actoriality have been identified. The spatial category has two dimensions, external and internal. External spatiality deals with register, whereas internal spatiality in tonal music is concerned with the tonal centre. Temporality is a matter of pace and rhythm and Actoriality is related to thematics.

Finally, we may refer to the theory of linguistic markedness of M. Shapiro which led Robert Hatten to offer a markedness theory in music. This theory of musical markedness is found to be applied to western music.

1.3.0. Previous works on Modern Bengali Songs

There are many works on MBS from the literary point of view as regards their development, composition, tune and so on. But none of these works has discussed MBS from the linguistic point of view, which is the main objective of the present research work.

1.4.0. Goal of the study

The goal of this research work is to present a linguistic analysis of MBS from Forties till Seventies, with reference to language, form and content, metrical style and melody by applying the linguistic methodology.

At first, the level of language has been analysed dealing with the Phonological, Morphological, Syntactical, Lexical and Semantic characteristics of MBS.

The structure of the Form and Content of MBS, as literary pieces, is presented with reference to their paradigmatic and syntagmatic relationship.
The analysis of MBS as metrical texts has been done with reference to various styles of Bengali metre, word boundary features, sound patterning features and the correlation between the metrical text and the musical text.

Then, the melodic aspect of MBS has been treated linguistically with reference to the duration of some special sound segments, pitch variation and the different types of melodic structure of MBS.

1.5.0. Collection of data

The method of data collection comprises the documentation including library work; data gathering through records, gramophone companies, interviews and recording of the samples.

1.6.0. Methodology

The present work aims at analysing the levels of Modern Bengali Songs along with the structure of their form and content. The analysis is data based and the whole analysis has been done following the principles of synchronic methodology.

1.7.0 Scope of the Present Work

The present study has been divided into six chapters: Chapter one, being the introductory chapter of the present study mentions the different levels of MBS as musical texts. It also discusses how linguistic methodology has been applied by different scholars to study music. Then, it refers to the nature of previous works on MBS. It also deals with the collection of data and scope.

The analysis of the language of MBS with reference to their Phonological, Morphological, Syntactical, Lexical and Semantic characteristics has been presented in chapter two.

Chapter three offers an analysis of the form and content of MBS in terms of paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations.

The metrical patterns of MBS are described in chapter four. The nature of versification in relation to syllable, accent, foot or measure, rhythm or metre etc. is discussed here. Thus it shows how harmony and melody, the two main components of prosody, create an impact upon the metre of a song differentiating it from that of its corresponding poetic form.
The melodic aspect of MBS is dealt with linguistically in chapter five. It exhibits the characteristics of the melody of MBS, on the basis of their notations, in terms of segmental and suprasegmental features.

Chapter six draws the conclusion with all its findings.

Reference