Torch-bearers of kirana gharana, and their followers

DHARWAD: Pandit Bhimsen Joshi is synonymous with kirana gharana. Performers from kirana gharana have established their indelible mark on certain ragas, so much so that both the audience and the performers desire the ragas time and again. Ragas like Todi, Lalit, Multani, Patidip, Puriva, Marwa, Shuddha Kalyan, Darbari Kantha, Komal-Rishabh Asavari, etc, have acquired new dimensions under the kirana school of singing.

Most Hindustani musicians from Karnataka are exponents of kirana gharana, thanks to Ustad Abdul Kareem Khan (1872-1937). It has imbibed many features of the Carnatic tradition. The border region along Karnataka and Maharashtra is famous for kirana school of singing.

Kareem Khan and Abdul Waheed Khan (1885-1949) revolutionized khyal singing in the late 19th century by introducing the slow-tempo method to delineate the raaga note by note (vilambit).

Besides Kareem's cousin Abdul Wahid Khan, Joshi and Prabha Atre are considered to be the foremost representatives of the kirana school of music.

While Bande Ali Khan, Pt Sawai Gandharva, Pt Sureshbabu Mane, Hirabai Badodekar, Ustad Amir Khan, Gangubai Hangal, Prabha Atre, Manik Varma, Raskilal Andharia and Shripati Padigar and others kept the kirana gharana flag flying high. The new-generation singers, including Niaz Ahmad Khan-Faiyaz Ahmad Khan duo, Shakoor Khan (sarangee player), Mani Prasad, Pt Channulal Mishra, Mashkoor Ali Khan, Arshad Ali Khan, Jayateerth Mevundi, Venkateshkumar, Kaivalya Gurav, Sanhita Nandi and Vinayak Torvi among others are carrying the baton of the rich heritage.

Jayateerth Mevundi, Kaivalyaakumar Gurav, M Venkatesh Kumar, Vinayak Torvi, Sulabha Neeralagi and Gayatri Deshpande all from Dharwad district have carved a niche for themselves in the world of Hindustani music.

The Gangubai Hanagal Gurukul, which has come up in Hubli, would produce more Joshis and Gangubais to keep the tradition of Hindustani music alive.

KIRANA GHARANA

In kirana gayaki, the individual swaras (notes) of the raga are considered not just random points in the scale, but independent realms of music capable of horizontal expansion. Mind-blowing and emotion-drenched 'pukar' in the higher octaves form a part of the musical experience. Another unique feature of this gharana is the highly intricate and ornate use of 'Sargam Taan' (weaving patterns with the notations themselves).
How Hindustani music took roots in Dharwad

M L Kapur, TNN Jul 21, 2009, 10:46pm IST

HUBLI: There is an interesting story that underscores the important place that undivided Dharwad district enjoys in the Hindustani music scene in India. Once MP Prahalad Joshi went to meet a top official in Delhi, whose secretary told him to wait as he had come without appointment. Joshi sat in the lobby, but became restive after some time. He asked the secretary to tell the official that MP from Dharwad wanted to meet him. When this message was conveyed to the official, he immediately called Joshi in and offered him his apologies, and, a cup of coffee.

Still not convinced, the official asked Joshi: "Aap Dharwad se hein (are you from Dharwad)?" When Joshi said yes, he asked further: "Aap Mallikarjun Mansur-wale Dharwad se hein (are you from the land of Mallikarjun Mansur)?" When Joshi nodded, the official just said: "To jaaiye, aap ka kam ho jayega (your work will be done for sure)."

This incident was related by Joshi himself at the felicitation ceremony of noted Carnatic singer M Balamuralikrishna when he was conferred the Mallikarjun Mansur Samman in Dharwad earlier this year.

What is so special about the environment of Dharwad that it has produced singers like Bhimsen Joshi, Gangubai Hangal, Mallikarjun Mansur and Basavaraj Rajgur? Gangubai once said music cannot be confined by the geographical boundaries of north and south.

She felt Hindustani classical music took roots in Dharwad as royal musicians from the Mughal court at Agra and the seat of the Scindhias at Gwalior were regularly invited by the Maharajas of Mysore to perform in their court. On their way, they used to halt at Dharwad where music lovers arranged their impromptu concerts. Thus Hindustani classical music flourished in Dharwad.

On the other hand, the Carnatic music did not get a favourable environment as Dharwad was a part of Bombay Presidency. Thus, it was more under the cultural influence of Bombay than Madras, the seat of Carnatic music.

Gangubai gave her first public performance at the age of 11 in 1924 at Belgaum, where she sang the welcome song at the AICC secession presided over by Mahatma Gandhi. She gave her first music concert in Bombay in 1930 after being spotted by the Gramophone Company of India (GCI) at a talent scouting programme in Goregaon for their HMV
records. She gave her last concert at Thane in 2002, the year she was
honoured with the Padma Vibhushan award.

Gangubi once told this correspondent that she never ever attempted to
achieve anything in life. "Many a time, while singing, I was lost in a
trance...there was no conscious effort to aim for something. Music was
its own reward, and honours came by naturally."

But after the death of her daughter Krishna in 2004, Gangubai lost
interest in singing altogether. She was her constant accompanist, and
critic. After her death, she did not feel like singing any more. Despite her
punishing schedule as a singer, Gangubai remained devoted to her
family and enjoyed cooking for her children.

Interestingly, some of her music albums produced by GCI carry her
'janamnam', the one mentioned in her horoscope, as Gandhari Hangal,
while others identify her as Gangubai Hublikar, after she started to live
in Hubli.
When the maestro’s music mesmerized Hubli

GURUJANMUKHANDI, TNN | Dec 13, 2012, 10:30 AM IST

DHARWAD: A pall of gloom descended on the music fraternity in Dharwad on Wednesday as news of sitar maestro Pandit Ravi Shankar’s passing away spread. Though Dharwad, the hub of Hindustani music, was not fortunate to host alive concert by Pandit Ravi Shankar, Hubli was lucky to have him twice, when he performed in 1954 and 1970.

Baburao Hangal, son of doyen of Hindustani classical music Gangubai Hangal, recalls how Panditji had enthralled the audience with his mesmerizing performance. Panditji stayed in Gangubai’s house for three days when he came for the concert at the Railway Institute by Hubli Art Circle in 1954.

"Noted tabla maestro Allah Rakha was also there with Panditji and both stayed in our house as Hubli did not have good hotels or lodges at that time. It was a memorable experience listening to the stalwarts of the musical world,” says Baburao.

It was again in 1970 that Panditji visited Hubli for a concert when Kishan Maharaj accompanied him on the tabla. Music giants Pandit Bhimsen Joshi, MS Sahni, Talukdar Purnkumar, Mallikarjun Mansur, Basavaraj Rajguru and Gangubai Hangal also performed on the occasion. Kathak maestro Birju Maharaj was there to enthral dance lovers.

Music connoisseur and president of Bharateeya Sangeeta Vidyalaya of Dharwad, Raghavendra Ayi, recalls Panditji’s performance. "It was a ticketed programme at New English School premises in Hubli. As we were students, I and two of my friends could not afford three tickets. So we bought one ticket and attended the three-hour programme taking turns, each listening to Panditji for an hour,” he reminisces.

Ayi remembers how Panditji was annoyed due to some disturbance during the concert. Sumati Madiman who was the MLA representing Dharwad rural constituency had invited the then chief minister of Mysore State Veerendra Patil. The CM arrived late with his supporters and this led to some chaos in the front row. An annoyed Panditji stopped playing and said he would not resume till things settled down. "It was only after an apologetic Patil asked his people to be silent that the concert continued," says Ayi.
Music festival holds connoisseurs spellbound

DHARWAD: Leading artistes and their accompanists held the connoisseurs in Dharwad spellbound at the three-day 58th Sitar Ratna Rahimat Khan Punyatithi Sangeetotsava organised at Srujana auditorium in Dharwad by Bharateeya Sangeeta Vidyalaya and Dr Amajirao Shirur Ranga Ranga Mandira Trust which began on Saturday.

The pleasant weather coupled with melodious music by versatile artists was a real weekend treat for the packed audience. Praashekh Borkar and his younger brother Abhiijit Borkar, sons of Pt Shekhar Borkar of Pune set the mood on Saturday the opening day with their scintillating ‘Jugal Bandi’ (duet) on Sarod. With Uday Karpur ably accompanying them on table the young duo presented raag Hem Bihag entralling the audience. This was followed by Hindustani vocal Jugal Bandi by Apoorva Gokhale and Pallavi Joshi of Mumbai. The sisters started with raag Purvi and went on to present raag Hamir and Sohani before concluding with Bhairavi. The music lovers who are in their sixties and seventies were reminded of the Gayaki of Gajananaubawa Joshi, grand father of Apoorva and Pallavi who represent the 5th generation of vocalists in the Joshi Family.

It was young Savani Shende of Pune who stole the show on Sunday morning. With a perfect combination of Kirana and the Gvalio gharana, she mesmerized the packed audience with enchanting melody and strength of both. Starting with raag Lalat, she rendered Miya Ki Todi, Mishra Hansadhwni, a Marathi Abhang and finally concluded with a composition of Saint Kabir.

She received standing ovation when she finished her concert with confidence and mastery. Her crystal clear diction and overall sensitivity in presentation took the performance to a very high Aesthetic level.

On Sunday evening Rais and Hafiz, sons of Sitar maestro Bale Khan presenting sitar duet with Shaileshkumar playing table proved that the legacy of Rahimat Khan would continue for many more years to come.

Kathak dance by Vidha and Abhimanyu Lal of Delhi provided refreshing entertainment to the audience.
Pt Bhimsen Joshi's first guru was washer man

GURURAJ JAMKHANDI, TNN | Jan 26, 2011, 10:21 AM IST
READ MORE Pandit Bhimsen Joshi | Chennappa Kurthkoti

DHARWAD: Pandit Bhimsen Joshi's first guru was a professional washer man Chennappa Kurthkoti, who was also a singer. Kurthkoti was paid a princely sum of Rs 5 per month to teach Joshi sing. He taught the young boy to sing Raag Bhairav and Bhimpalas for eight months. But things changed when Joshi heard Ustad Abdul Kareem Khan and decided to sing like him.

Joshi went to Kundagol and heard Rambhavu Kundagolkar (aka Sawai Gandharva) perform. It further strengthened his resolve. One day when his mother Godavari scolded him for asking for "one more spoon of ghee" with his food, Joshi seized the excuse and ran away from home. He took a train from Gadag, his hometown, to Bijapur and sang his way into the ticket collector's heart. In Bijapur, a passerby hearing him sing told him: "If you serious about music, go to Gwalior and learn there."

Joshi hopped on to another train, this time to Pune, a centre of cultural activities. But when he approached a teacher there, he was told to pay Rs 100 as fee. Disheartened, he boarded a train to Mumbai, only to get caught for ticketless travelling at Bhusaval. He was kept without food for two days. In the Delhi-bound train too, he was caught again, and put into jail. But Joshi's resolve made him reach Gwalior and Jalandhar and learn from the gurus there.

Finally, one of them advised Joshi to learn from Sawai Gandharva, who was in Karnataka. He pursued music along with Gangubai Hangal at the house of Gandharva.
‘उस्ताद उस्मानखाँ यांनी संगीताची परंपरा जोगायला’

प्रमिणी गोरखळी

पुरुषूचे संगीत शिक्षण करताना म्हणून निवडलेले असलेले उस्ताद उस्मानखाँ यांनी हे कार्य केले. त्यांना त्यांच्या ही परंपरा येथे असणारी संगीताची परंपरा मुळे प्रसारित केली. 

उस्ताद उस्मानखाँ यांच्याकडून संगीत शिक्षणाची आलेली आर्टरी, संगीताच्या शिक्षणाच्या तीन चौकीकरणीतील एकत्र बनवताना आलेली आर्टरी कसे त्याचा आलेला आहे, त्याचे अभ्यास आणि अनुभवाचा म्हणजेच त्याचे अभ्यास, संगीताच्या आपातकाच्या व संगीत शिक्षणाच्या आपातकाच्या भूमिका निवडून दिली. उस्ताद उस्मानखाँ यांनी त्याच्या शिक्षेतृकाच्या आनंदीत बनवलेले संगीत छंदावलींतील व त्यांनी अनेक प्रत्येक प्रतिक्रिया दिलेली परंपरा बनवलेली परंपरा. 

उस्ताद उस्मानखाँ यांनी संगीताच्या विषयातील आलेल्या आर्टरींचे त्यांच्या शिक्षणाच्या तीन चौकीकरणीतील एकत्र बनवताना आलेली आर्टरी कसे त्यांचा आलेला आहे, त्यांचे अभ्यास आणि अनुभवाचा म्हणजेच त्यांचे अभ्यास, संगीताच्या आपातकाच्या व संगीत शिक्षणाच्या आपातकाच्या भूमिका निवडून दिली. उस्ताद उस्मानखाँ यांनी त्याच्या शिक्षेतृकाच्या आनंदीत बनवलेले संगीत छंदावलींतील व त्यांनी अनेक प्रत्येक प्रतिक्रिया दिलेली परंपरा बनवलेली परंपरा.
The voice of tradition speaks

A Gangubai concert, like at ol. say, Mallikarjun Mansur or Munshi Chandigar, is a rarity in Bombay. If these artists are not heard by a few, why should the sponsors of periodical events and music associations do it? It is a vicious circle, born to die. Music is of the world, and the world is the medium for its rendering. But if the world is not interested, the artist feels that his music does not find a natural audience, and the cycle of non-interest becomes a vicious one.

But there is hope, for there are artists today who are not afraid to challenge the traditionalists. Among them, Gangubai Hangal is a shining example. Born March 5, 1915, into a musical family, Gangubai Hangal started her singing career at an early age. She was trained by her mother, Ambabai, who was herself a renowned singer. Gangubai's voice is pure and unadulterated, and she is known for her deep, resonant tone that can carry over long distances.

Gangubai Hangal is one of the four Kanhada singers whose influence is felt in the present day. She is a newcomer to Bombay, but her voice has already won the hearts of the city's music lovers. Her concerts are eagerly awaited, and her music is a source of inspiration to many. She is a true representative of the Kanhada tradition, and her singing is a testament to the enduring power of tradition.