



PADMASHREE SMT. MANIK VERMA

AN EXEMPLARY SWARSADHAK

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ABSTRACT

Padmashree Smt. Manik Verma. She stands as a true gem and is a shining star in the domain of Hindustani Music. Her radiating excellence, deep study and expression truly captivated hearts of music lovers and all levels of audience ranging from novices to very learned people & performing artists which is very rare. Let's take a deep dive into her musical odyssey, tracing her journey from childhood to her extensive training, her studies as a student and as a Guru & her remarkable success in the field of music.

Introduction

We will uncover and detail out the distinctive qualities of her voice and gayaki, various genres which showcases her versatility. Her performances encompassed a wide spectrum, ranging from Classical Music and Semi-Classical Music to Light Music, Marathi Bhavgeet, Lavani, Thumri-Dadra, Marathi Natyasangeet, Abhangas, and more, creating a rich tapestry of musical expression.

Her Childhood & Training

R Manik Balwant Dadarkar, dearest daughter of Shri. Balwant Dadarkar and Smt. Hirabai Dadarkar. She was having keen interest right from her childhood in music. Her mother observed this and decided to give her formal musical training under some guru, with a clear aim of making her a genuine vocalist and with a great focus, commitment & lot of encouragement. This helped Manik to enjoy & attracted more interest in various aspects of music enriching her.

She started her musical tutelage in the beginning from Shri. Dattopant Bhope Guruji at Bharat Gayan Samaj, Pune. Her foundation was further solidified later by Shri. Bapurao

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Ketkar (Disciple of Shri. Bhaskarbua Bakhale) & Shri. Bagalkotkar Bua. With such great gurus and with their vision, Manik was a great artist during that time as well. In addition to musical teaching, allied areas like breathing techniques, damsas, based on gender and nature of voice selection and presentation of various musical aspects, selection of poetry etc. Keenly observing the gurus automatically helped Manik to grow in multiple dimensions. Her first performance at Surat just at the age of 19 years, became very famous and was greatly appreciated by one of the legendary Sir Omkarnath Thakur. This was a major boost.

Advanced Training

With rock solid foundation, Manik became really a good singer and it was further enriched and polished by trainings/taleem by various other legendary artists and gurus.

She received training from Ustad Inayat Khan, Ustad Gulam Rasul Khan and even took training from Ustad Bashir Khan from Hyderabad. This helped in developing the insight to look towards the compositions and their aesthetical presentation.

She further received a training from Pandit Sureshbabu Mane and Pandita Gaanhira Hirabai Badodekar of Kirana Gharana. Kirana gharana is famous and well recognized for their soft yet melodious rendering & swarpradhan gayaki with well-expressed emotions. Almost during the same time, she also received the training from Pandit Jagannathbua Purohit (Gunidas). He is one of the very famous artist from 'Agra' Gharana. This helped Manikji to get many virtues and special features of Agra gharana.

In addition to this, she took special training/Taaleem from Pandit Bholanath Bhatt from Allahabad on khayal, Thumri, Dadra and different Bandish. These bandishes were unique in terms of wordings, wajan, khayal presentation style, influenced Thumri elements, use of unusual raagas, blend of gharanas, innovative taan patterns, expressive layakari (rhythmic play), specific focus on musical phrasing, diversity in themes of bandish.

Below are some key and unique features of individual gharanas

Tanras Gharana:

1. **Emphasis on Rhythm (Tala):** Tanras Gharana places significant importance on intricate rhythmic patterns, showcasing a mastery of various talas.
2. **Tabla Integration:** This gharana often incorporates elaborate tabla compositions, contributing to a dynamic and rhythmic musical experience.
3. **Innovative Tanpura Playing:** The gharana is known for its unique approach to playing the tanpura, exploring different tunings and techniques.

Agra Gharana:

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1. **Khayal Singing Style:** Agra Gharana is renowned for its khayal singing style, characterized by a meticulous exploration of intricate melodic patterns and intricate taans (fast, ornamented musical phrases).
2. **Emotional Depth:** The gharana is known for evoking deep emotions through the use of meends (glides), gamaks (ornamentation), and intricate modulation of notes.
3. **Dhrupad Influence:** Agra Gharana has preserved elements of the dhrupad tradition in its khayal presentations, incorporating a sense of grandeur and gravitas.
4. **Nomtom (Harkat):** The gharana is known for its use of nomtom, subtle melodic nuances and microtonal ornamentation that enhance the expressiveness of the performance.

Kirana Gharana:

1. **Bhava (Expression):** Kirana Gharana is recognized for its emphasis on expressing deep emotional content (bhava) through the music, focusing on the emotional connection between the artist and the audience.
2. **Bol Banao:** Kirana Gharana often employs the "bol banao" technique, where the artist vocalizes the rhythmic patterns vocally before playing them on the instrument, contributing to a unique rhythmic interpretation.

Banaras Gharana:

1. **Intense Vocalization:**
 - Banaras Gharana is known for its intense and robust vocalization, characterized by powerful renditions and a focus on vocal techniques that demand strength and control.
2. **Dhrupad Influence:**
 - There is a strong influence of the dhrupad style in the Banaras Gharana, reflected in the structured and methodical development of ragas during performances.
3. **Precision in Rhythmic Patterns:**
 - The gharana places a high emphasis on rhythmic precision, showcasing intricate taan patterns and layakari (rhythmic play) that require skillful execution.
4. **Khayal Gayaki:**

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- While rooted in dhrupad, the Banaras Gharana has evolved to include khayal gayaki, offering a balanced fusion of the two classical styles.

5. Use of Bol Banao:

- Musicians from Banaras Gharana often employ the "bol banao" technique, where they vocalize the rhythmic patterns vocally before playing them on the instrument, contributing to a unique rhythmic interpretation.

6. Rich Instrumental Tradition:

- The gharana has a rich instrumental tradition, particularly in tabla playing, with a focus on complex compositions and intricate tala structures.

Punjabi Aang is characterized by vibrant folk influences, dholak and Percussion emphasis, Use of contemporary elements, energetic performances, and a celebration of the rich cultural heritage of the Punjab region.

All these helped Manikji to become all round performer by assimilating various gharanas, their specialities. Also, individual artists with their vision, thought process, understanding and expressions helped her in overall maturing the thoughtprocess getting better artist out of her in short span of time across all aspects of music.

During this time day by day she became more popular due to inherent exhibition of her style, thought process, variations in musical rendering, expressing emotions, weightage on swara , laya, taal and Shabda and giving justice to every different genere and type of music viz. Classical, Semi-classical (Thumri, Dadra, Chaiti, Kajri, Hori), Natyageet, Bhavgeet attracting all types of audiences & equally pleased.

Having said that, she was greatly influenced throughout in her life by her idol 'Pandita Gaanhira Hirabai Badodekar'.

Manik Tai's voice carried a natural sweetness. Her mastery over rhythm, keen understanding of lyrics, disciplined training, extensive listening, deep scholarship, and constant introspection made her singing truly captivating. She maintained a balanced and composed musical expression—never swayed away by the swaras (notes) nor distracted by complex taans. Her presentation was devoid of any tendency toward showmanship, yet remained powerful in its quiet impact.

Her performances reflected a gentle inclusivity. Even if her singing style didn't create a dramatic impression, the depth of her approach left a lasting influence. One realizes that following her musical path does not require compromising on core artistic values. It is in this unwavering commitment to musical integrity that we find the true brilliance of Manik Tai.

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In 1948, she married lyricist Amar Verma. They had four daughters—Rani Verma, Bharti Achrekar, Vandana Gupte, and Aruna Jayaprakash. Rani and Bharti inherited her musical legacy, while Vandana Gupte became a well-known Marathi actress.

Her acclaimed autobiography “*Kiti Rangalā Khel*” was published in 1992. More recently, HMV released an audio cassette featuring a collection of her Marathi songs titled “*Amrutahuni God*” (Sweeter than Nectar). Her music was loved by audiences both in India and abroad, and was widely broadcast on platforms such as All India Radio and Doordarshan.

She was honored with numerous prestigious awards, including the Padma Shri by the Government of India (1974), the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award (1986), Maharashtra Gaurav Puraskar (1990), and the Lata Mangeshkar Award (1992), of which she was the first recipient. She also received the Ga.Di.Ma. Pratishthan Award in 1995. In Cleveland, Ohio, her birthday, May 16, was officially declared as “*Manik Verma Day*”, a testament to her global impact.

Manik Tai passed away in Mumbai in her later years. In her memory, the *Manik Verma Pratishthan* was established in Mumbai. The foundation regularly organizes events and honors individuals who have made significant contributions to music with the “*Manikratna*” award.

A humble tribute to the work of Legendary Artist Padmashree Manik Verma !!

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