



**On Gender Equality and Sustainable Development by Women: Area-Raga Music
(Hindustani System or North Indian System)**

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Abstract:

The richest cultural heritage of India, North Indian Classical Music has historically been dominated by male artists, relegating female contributors to the periphery. This study aims to rectify this oversight by exploring the significant yet understated role of female artists in shaping North Indian Classical Music trajectory. Through a feminist lens, this research examines the lives, works, and experiences of pioneering female musicians, highlighting their innovative styles, technical mastery, and artistic leadership. By analyzing performance practices, musical compositions, and oral histories, this study reveals the ways in which female artists have challenged patriarchal norms, expanded musical expression, and enriched North Indian Classical Music diversity. This research contributes to a more inclusive understanding of North Indian Classical Music history, underscores the importance of gender equality in the arts, and celebrates the unsung female artists of Indian classical music.

Keywords: Raga, Feminism, Classical Music, Artists, Hindustani, Gender equality.

Objectives of the Study:

This paper has been studied with some purpose as shown below-

- To study about the contribution of female artists in Indian Classical music.
- To understand the situation of Female artists in the last centuries.
- To explore the ways of creating opportunities for the female artists to learn and grow.



Methodologies:

The conventional data collection method of secondary data from different sources has been used for this study. Apart from this, the data extracted from different discussion, seminars, interviews related to the study has been used.

Introduction:

At the outset it should be mentioned that Indian Classical Music or ‘Shastriya Sangit’ now popularly known as ‘Raga Music’ is twofold (i) Raga Sangit or Raga Music (Hindustani system) (ii) Raga Sangit or Raga music (Karnatic system). Gender Equality here means equality between masculine gender (male person) and feminine gender (female person). It may be relevantly mentioned here that ‘feminism’ deals with the matter of the theory of political, economic and social equality of the sexes. ‘Advocacy of the claims of women to equality with those of men’, we are concerned here with the musical culture of the women belonging to the traditional or common socio cultured families.

Now ‘Gender Equality’ is a popular term used profusely wherever necessary. Sustainable contributions made by women are recognized since the beginning of the 20th century. Prior to that, importance of women in the different spheres was not publicly recognized. Some of the prominent women performers in this realm were Kesharbai Kerkar (1892-1977), Moghubai Kurdikar (1904-2001), Hirabai Barodekar (1905-1989), Siddheswari Devi (1908-1977), Gangubai Hangal (Kirana, 1913-2009) who made their contributions mostly in the thirties and forties of the last century.

In the early thirties of the last centuries gramophones, radio and various musical functions helped develop wide popularity of the musical art among the common people. Thus, Raga music, Bhavsangit, Loksangit and popular other music forms of North Indian were cultivated more than before. Women also had opportunity to hear and learn music. Old conservation gradually gave way to female participation.



After Independence further developments in the sphere of musical art provided more opportunity particularly for the female artists. A continuous flow of the women performers gradually appeared all over the country. Some of women were famous for their respective performances. Such as- Saraswati bai Rane (Kirana gharana, 1913-2006), Begum Akhtar (1914-1974), Roshanwara Begum (Kirana gharana, 1917-1982), Shova Gurtu (1925-2004), Sharan Rani (1929-2008), Annapurna Devi (Maihar Gharana, 1927- Present), Girija Devi (Benaras Gharana, 1929-Present), Meera Banerjee (Patiala Gharana, 1930-2012), Malabika Kanan (Kirana, 1930-2009), Kishori Amonkar (Jaipur Atraouli, 1931-Present), Parvin Sultana (1950- Present), Veena Sahastrabudhhe (1948- Present) who belong to different gharanas.

Now different courses for learning music have been introduced in schools, colleges, universities for relevant studies and practical performances for both male and female students. Many music competitions, scholarships are often held to find out female talents in the domain of music. The opportunities are also available for the compliant female artists to perform in radio and television.

Thus, it has been proved that women can keep pace with men in socio-cultural and other sphere too, because of the removal of so called 'Gender bar'. This article ends with some relevant comments of Annapurna Devi and Prof. Shisirkana Dhar Chowdhury, two of the famous female personalities of the domain of 'Raga Music'.

1. Annapurna Devi said- 'The secret of mastering the art of "Indian Classical Music" is not in learning a lot of ragas but in practicing some ragas taught by the Guru for years together'. ('Guru Shishya Parampara' published in journal of the dept. of Instrumental Music. Vol 3, 1985)
2. Prof. Shisirkana Dhar Chowdhury said- 'proper training and direct guidance are basically essential for primary as well as higher studies and cultivation, arrangements



or successful but then, an ordinary but cultivated standard widely prevalent at the level of the common people ensures solidarity in the cultivation and safe-keeping of this art'. ('Teaching and learning process of Music', vol. 4, 1991: 22)

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The said comments were made in the respective article published in the journal of the dept. of Instrumental music, RBU, Kol. respectively.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, the contribution of female artists to Indian classical music is a testament to their talent, resilience, and determination. Despite facing centuries of marginalization and patriarchal barriers, women have played a vital role in shaping the trajectory of this ancient tradition. From the pioneering efforts of courtesan musicians to the modern-day virtuosos, female artists have expanded the boundaries of Indian classical music, introducing innovative styles, techniques, and perspectives.

Their struggles and triumphs serve as a powerful reminder of the importance of gender equality in the arts, highlighting the need to recognize and celebrate the achievements of female musicians. As we move forward, it is essential to create a more inclusive and equitable musical landscape, providing opportunities and platforms for women to shine.

After this long discussion we can say, that the equal participations of women from the last centuries not only in North Indian or Karnatic music but in every field of music is mentionable. Also, the women proudly represented the Indian Classical Music in India and abroad. That reflects the advanced socio-cultural aspects of Indian music as well as a whole wide thinking of people. Last but not the least this, 'feminism' in Indian music enhanced the process of development of music education for common people, and development in thinking of 'equality' in other areas where Gender partiality still exists. By acknowledging and honoring the contributions of female artists, we not only enrich our understanding of Indian classical music but also pave the way for a



brighter, more harmonious future – one where music knows no gender, and talent knows no bounds.

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