
Musical analysis of Sardool Sikander's Songs

Dr.Rajesh Sharma¹

Satnam Singh²

Abstract:

The people of Punjab have always had a flamboyant nature. Here, people dance, sing, and celebrate on every joyous occasion. Each festival in Punjab has its own unique traditions that form the basis for music and songs. Even during weddings, various types of songs are sung. In Punjab, people from all religions live together harmoniously. Each religion has its own traditional music and songs. At religious places, people sing religious songs related to their faith, like Qawwalis and Sufi music at the shrines of saints. In Hinduism, devotional songs related to deities are sung during Jagrans or birth festivals. In Christianity, hymns related to Jesus and Psalms are sung. Similarly, in Sikhism, Shabad Kirtan, Kavishri, and Vaars related to Gurbani are performed.

It can be succinctly said that even though the people here are deeply religious, they are also closely connected to music. There has always been immense love and respect for musicians among the people of Punjab. This is why Punjabi music has flourished not only in India but also abroad. Over time, many artists have entertained people through their music. Even before the era of recordings, artists have contributed significantly in elevating Punjabi music to new heights.

In the culture of Punjab, where men have received honor and respect in every field, they have also continued to showcase their singing prowess over time and have earned fame, including Asa Singh Mastana, Shri Lal Chand Yamla Jatt, Sukhjinder Shinda, Kuldeep Manak, Padam Shri Puran Chand Wadali, Gurdas Maan, Padam Shri Hansraj Hans, and Sardool Sikander. The subject of the research paper below is a musical study of Sardool Sikander Ji's singing.

Keywords: Singing, Punjab, Raag, Taal, Rhythm, Song.

Life & contribution

Sardool Sikander ¹“born on January 15, 1961 in the village of Khedi Naudh Singh, was a prominent Punjabi singer who came from a musical family. His father, Sagar Mastana, was known for creating a unique type of tabla played with bamboo sticks” ¹. Sardool faced many challenges due to poor family conditions but persevered in his musical journey. He married Amar

¹ Assistant professor, Dept. of Music, Guru Nanak Dev University Amritsar

² Ph.D Research Scholar , Dept. of Music, Guru Nanak Dev University Amritsar

Noorie, a famous singer and actress, and had two sons, Sarang and Alaap Sikander, who are also making their carrier in acting and music. Sardool also acted in films like ²“Jagga Daku”, ³“Police”³ and ⁴“Panchayat”⁴. Despite initial rejections from music companies, he eventually found mentorship under Ustad Charanjit Ahuja and gained recognition for his singing talent.

Sardool Sikander's Singing Attributes

Sardool Sikander's singing captivates people from all sections of society. His singing in Punjab is replete with aesthetically pleasing elements such as ragas, rhythms, musical patterns, embellishments,

meend, murki, khatka, and kan, making it unparalleled compared to any other artist in Punjab. His voice has a strange allure that immerses the listener in the emotion he portrays while singing. The enunciation of words in his style is quite unique. He sings each word as if the words themselves are speaking. The magic of such an entrancing voice is evident in the initial verses and alaap of his rendition ⁵“Khol Bhuhe Mandira De Khol”⁵ where words are delivered with utmost intensity. Listening to his singing, one can sense a touch of classical music in his style, especially with the extensive use of meend and khatkas in thumris. These qualities are easily heard in most of his sad songs. A glimpse of these attributes can be found in the introductory verses of his famous song ⁶“Saada Tere Kol Saman”⁶ where the words clearly depict the shattered world. Incorporating elements of various surrounding ragas in the primary raga in his songs seemed to come naturally to him. He effortlessly executed even the most difficult harkats and taans with great ease. After describing the qualities of Sikanders gayaki now there are few musical items which analysis is given below.

Musical analysis of Sardool's Songs

❖ Multi-faciliated Songs

Sardool Sikander initiated his singing career by presenting the singing styles of various artists in a single song named ⁷“Aagi Roadways Di Laari”⁷. In this song, he showcased how certain famous artists of that time would perform it. He first presented the singing style of the renowned singer Sukhjinder Shinda, followed by Kuldeep Manak's rendition of “Roadways Di Laari”, and then styles of Muhammad Sadiq, Ustad Yamla Jatt, Alam Lohar, Ghulam Ali, and Gurdas Maan. Sardool Sikander performed this song on a Jalandhar Doordarshan program, which became very popular and illuminated his name across Punjab.

After this song, Sardool Sikander set off a wave of songs in the Punjabi music world, covering various genres. A distinctive feature of his singing was that he performed each style with great authenticity.

This research paper focuses on the musical study of Sardool Sikander's singing, examining his musical styles or methods following analytics of the musicality of each style through one of his songs and also mention where his songs were rich in beauty.

In 1991, several of his cassettes were released including "Roadways Di Laari", ⁸"Doli Mashook Di"⁸, and an album ⁹"Husna De Malko"⁹ etc. which became very popular.

❖ **Beat Songs:**

Sardool Sikander entertained people through his songs for occasions like weddings, celebrations, and other joyful events with many danceable tracks. One such a song is ¹⁰"Mitraan Nu Maar Gaya Ni Tera Thumka"¹⁰ (Your dance move has killed me). This song has been composed in the Raag Bhairavi. In this Raag, there is a beautiful use of both the Komal (flat) Rishabh and Shuddh (natural) Rishabh notes. The song starts with the line "Kise nu nak da koka maar gaya" (Someone got hit by a nose pin), where the notes Ga ga ga ga ga ga Re ga are used, and in "Kise nu lakk da thumka" (Someone waist's dance move), the notes re re re reSa niSa are used. The song beautifully presents both Rishabh notes right from the beginning. When the main line of the song is sung for the second time, the Shuddh Rishabh note is used very aptly. The use of notes ga ga ga re (Ga) throughout the song embellishes it. A unique beauty of this song's verse is that unlike most songs where the verse starts from higher notes than the main line, this song's verse starts from lower notes. For example, in the first verse "Hawa ch uddi phire jawani" (Youth flies in the air), it is expressed through the notes Paani neePa, neeSa Saani, gaare Saani SaaSa. If we talk about the rhythm aspect, this song is sung in Kehrva Taal (a rhythmic cycle). In this song, the rhythm is paused intermittently to enhance the beauty of the beat, like at the beginning when the words "kise nu nak da laung maar gaya" (Someone got hit by a nose ring) are started, and at that moment, the rhythm is also paused. In musical terminology, this means that after almost three and a half cycles of rhythm, it is suspended and then resumed with a five-beat pickup to create a danceable atmosphere in the song.

❖ **Sad Songs:**

Sardool Sikander Ji has spoken about those young individuals who have faced problems in their love life. They seek music that can accompany their grief during such times. Sardool Sikander Ji has made an effort to portray their anguish through his songs. He has sung many such sorrowful tracks, and the leading song from one of his albums, ¹¹"Us Kudi Ne"¹¹ (That Girl), is currently under musical study. 'Par Menu Dilon Ni Bhulaya Os Kudi Ne' (The girl never erased me from her heart) This song narrates the tale of a girl who was deeply in love with her partner but is no longer with him. The song is composed in the Raag Charukeshi. The music has been provided by Jaidev Kumar and Davinder Khanna. At the start of the song, the musical notes 'Vasiya Rehnda Si Mera Saah Jide Sahvan Ch' Pa Pa Pa dha Pa ma ma ma ma, dha ma dha ma Ga Re Gaga Ga Re Sa' are used. 'Likhia Rehnda Si Mera Naam Jidi Bahvan Te' Pa Pa (Dha) ma ma ma ma, dha ma dha ma Ga Re Gaga Ga Re Sa' here employs the shud note of Dhaivat. 'Haule Haule Sahvan Cho' Ga Sa Ga Sa ni ni ni Sa- 'Mitaiya Os Kudi Ne' Sa Sa Sa Ga ma ma ni dha 'Par Mainu Dilon Ni Bhulaiya Os Kudi Ne' Pa Pa dha Pa ma ma dha Pa ma Ga Re Sa Sa Sa Sa Ga ma Ga Pa Pa the song prominently features these musical notes. Discussing the rhythm of this song, a Keharva Taal pattern known as 'Duff' is played."

❖ **Religious Songs**

Religious music is a distinct genre akin to various other forms of music, where the essence of the divine is captured through melodious compositions. It is an art form where songs are sung with deep reverence and focus on the Almighty. Sardool Sikander Ji, a revered figure in music, lent his voice to hymns and verses that resonate with the teachings of different faiths. His repertoire included not only Sikh religious music but also bhajans that reflect the spiritual messages of various religions. Furthermore, he made significant contributions to Sufi music, which holds a special place in the Muslim faith, enriching this genre with his soulful renditions.”

❖ **Bhant Related to Hindu Religion**

The researcher is conducting a musical study based on the main song of Sardool Sikander Ji's devotional cassette titled ¹²“De Charna Da Pyaar Cassette”¹². The bhajan (devotional song) “De Charna Da Pyaar Maaye Ni Mainu Rakh Lai Sevadaar” has been set to music in the Raag Bhairavi by Sardool Sikander Ji. Raag Bhairavi is such a raag in which 12 notes can be used. The scholars believe that this raag can be sung or played at any time within 24 hours. The full essence of Raag Bhairavi is evident in this bhajan. The beauty of this bhajan has been further enhanced by using some other notes here and there. For example, when the line “Tere Bhawan Te Kara Naukri” is repeated for the second time, a very lovely dialogue with the sharp Madhyam note is seen, which is observed repeatedly in this bhajan. At the beginning of the verse of this bhajan, a pattern has been used with the words “Bhagtan De Naal Bhetan Gavaan Ek Pal Vi Na Sovan Main Ek Pal Vi Na Sovan”, Pa Pa Pa dhaPamaga, ma ma ma Pamagare, ga ga reSa Sa re ma dha... And when this line is sung for the second time, a very lovely dialogue with the sharp Madhyam note is presented again. Another interesting thing from the rhythm perspective is that a pattern of Kaharva taal is seen throughout the bhajan, while in the cross line, the Western Kaharva taal has been used very aptly.

❖ **Shabad related to the Sikh faith**

Sikhism is a monotheistic religion. It begins with Sri Guru Granth Sahib, which starts with the meaning that God is one. Sikh philosophy teaches that all humans and different types of beliefs are the creation of the one truth. It gives equal respect to everyone. Sardool Sikander Ji sang many shabads related to the Sikh faith, among which ¹³“Mil Mere Pritma Jiyo Tudh Bin Khari Nimani”¹³ means Come meet me, my beloved, without you I am incomplete. This verse has been melodiously composed based on Raag Sindhi Bhairavi. The Shabad poignantly expresses the pain of separation from the beloved. Throughout this verse, various musical harmonies that depict Raag Sindhi Bhairavi have been utilized. Through an alaap, the sequence of notes Sa*, ni, dha, Pa, ma, Pa, ha, Ni, Sa* has been beautifully arranged. The emotional essence of the words has been carefully considered while composing this verse musically. It ensures that the sentiment of the words is not lost upon listening. The Bani of this Shabad portray a deep yearning, illustrating how the soul laments in the absence of its beloved. This yearning can be felt while listening to this musical composition. In the line ‘Main naini neend na aave Jiyo, bhav ann na paani’ (My eyes do not find sleep Jiyo, even food and water hold no appeal), the emotion is conveyed through the mood of

Raag Chandrakauns. Despite the base raag being Sindhi Bhairavi, elements of Raag Chandrakauns are also intermittently displayed. If we discuss the rhythmic aspect of this verse, it has been rhythmically set to western pattern of Dadra Taal.

❖ Sufi verse related to sufism

This form is considered related to the Muslim faith, where the concepts of ‘Ishq Haqeeqi’ (true divine love) and ‘Ishq Majazi’ (metaphorical love) are discussed. It includes narratives of ‘Peer Fakir’, ‘Heer Ranjha’, ‘Sassi Punnu’, and others through song. Sardool Sikander has made significant contributions to Sufi music. One of the songs performed by him, ¹⁴“Ranjhe Jhaak Naal Katt Lu Fakiri Par Main Nahi Jana Kheriyan De” ¹⁴ is composed in Raga Bhairavi. The song speaks of Heer’s refusal to go with her people, indicating her preference for a life of asceticism with Ranjha over her’s kin. It is sung in the high octave range. The song starts with, ‘Bina Vekh Ke Os Miyan Rajhan Nu’(Without seeing my beloved Ranjha, my Ranjha won’t be pleased’ and uses the musical notes ni----Sa----niSareSani (ga) niSanidha dha ni Sanidha. The song skillfully uses the sharp Madhyam and Shudh Rishabh notes repeatedly. The key phrase of the song, ‘I won’t go with my kin’ is rendered as Sa Sa Ga Sani Sani dha ni Sa-- gaRega gamarega Sa, where Shudh Rishabh is used for embellishment. Regarding the rhythm of this song, it is adorned with Laggis and layakaries in a fast Kaharva beat, adding to the rhythmic allure of the piece.

Conclusion

In summary, we can say that Sardool Sikander, Punjab's renowned singer, was a shining star in the realm of Punjabi music. Sardool Sikander was the master of a beautiful, lively, and refined style of singing. While his voice exuded devotion and quality in devotional songs, it also possessed a unique gravity suitable for poignant melodies. His voice resonated consistently across all three octaves, conveying strong emotions through his singing, be it in fast-paced songs, soulful melodies, devotional hymns, or Sufi compositions, giving each piece a distinctive identity. Sardool Sikander was very knowledgeable about both traditional and modern aspects of Punjabi music. The songs he sang are invaluable treasures for our musical community. In the field of Punjabi music, there is no artist who does not feel inspired upon hearing Sardool Sikander's name, acknowledging his talent and contribution. From the above description, it becomes clear that Sardool Sikander was a multi-dimensional singer who was not proficient in just one style of singing but excelled in every genre he performed, doing justice to each style with fairness. Although Sardool Sikandar left this world forever on 24th february 2021 in physical form but through his songs he will live forever in the hearts of every music lover.

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