



CENTRE FOR CULTURAL STUDIES & DEVELOPMENT

Excerpt from the Study on Practice of KIRTAN- Haveli Sangeet

KIRTAN is a Sanskrit word which literally means narrating, reciting or describing an idea or a story. The tradition of Kirtan began hundreds of years ago in 6th century India. Poets used to wander from one place to the other singing intricate stories from the Vedas and Upanishads, which are some of the earliest known religious texts in the world. The only way these religious texts could be passed down was through word of mouth. So from one generation to the next, for thousands of years, the Vedas were memorised and passed down through the ages.

In the early 16th century, Hindu Bhakti Saint Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu (known as the 'Father of Kirtan') disseminated the power of Kirtan around the world, inspiring thousands of people during his lifetime, and beginning a movement that continues to this day.

Bhakti Yoga & Kirtan: Bhakti yoga is the path of emotion where realisation comes through devotion and love of a personal god (ishta deva). It is bhakti yoga which is the source of the practice of kirtan. The devotional practice of singing, worshipping and chanting to the Hindu deities emphasized the intense longing to know God. Kirtan is a way of accessing the mental stillness of meditation without having

to sit still for hours. The practice known as 'call and response' when the lead singer sings the kirtan one phrase at a time and the collected group repeats the phrase back, is a way of letting go of the mind. This is because it uses the power of mantra (repeated sound) to focus and still the mind, enabling access to that deeper state of stillness within our consciousness. All one has to do is to listen and respond. The practice of singing in a group unifies an individual with those around and this collective participation contributes in creating a larger global community.

Kirtan singing practise in India, its preservation and promotion

Musical recitation of hymns, mantras and the praise of deities have ancient roots in Hinduism, as evidenced by the Samaveda and other Vedic literature. Kirtan were popularized by the Bhakti movement of medieval era Hinduism, starting with the South Indian Alvars (Vaishnavism) and Nayanars (Shaivism) around the 6th century, which spread in central, northern, western and eastern India particularly after the 12th century, as a social and congregational response to Hindu-Muslim conflicts. The foundations of the *Kirtan* traditions are also found in other Hindu scriptures such as the *Bhagavad-gita* where Krishna describes multiple paths to spiritual freedom, including karma marga (way of works), jnana marga (way of knowledge) and bhakti marga (way of loving devotion to god). *Kirtan* relates to the bhakti marga tradition of Hinduism. References to *Kirtan* as a musical recitation are also found in the Bhagavata Purana, an important Vaishnava text.

Kirtan is locally known as *Abhang*, *Samaj Gayan*, *Haveli Sangeet*,

Vishnupad, Harikatha. The Vaishnava temples and monasteries of Hinduism in Assam and northeastern, called *Satra*, have a large worship hall named *Kirtan ghar* – a name derived from their being used for congregational singing and performance arts.

Centre for Cultural Studies & Development conducted a Study on 'Practise of Kirtana' to understand the fascinating journey of this temple centric ancient art form and to take a firsthand authentic experience, Ms Paulami Guha, Founder Member Secretary toured three different places in India. Due to the covid Pandemic situation, CCSD decided to select only a few places among many. Firstly Nathdwara(Rajasthan) where Haveli Sangeet is sung daily in Srinathji Temple; Lord Krishna is worshipped here as a seven year old child. The second visit was to Mathura and Vrindavan. Here 20 kms away from Mathura is a place called Jatipura. Haveli Sangeet originated at this place and now the music is sung in Rajadhiraj Shree Dwarkadhish temple as part of the daily ritual. A tour was also conducted to Nabadwip, the Kirtan capital of the world situated in district Nadia in West Bengal to study the singing style of Namkirtan and Rasakirtan.

Apart from these study tours, CCSD also interviewed eminent singers and scholars who expressed their views and gave an insight to their respective subjects.

Haveli Sangeet

Haveli Sangeet is a divine art form popularly known as temple music practised by the Vaishnavites of Nathdwara in Rajasthan. Nathdwara is the mainseat of the vaishnava devotional cult which created a rich historical tradition of temple based music. 'Haveli' is referred to a palace or mansion that the deity chooses to live in. The main component of Haveli Sangeet is the Dhrupad Hindustani classical

singing style. In comparison to Dhrupad, Haveli Sangeet claimed superior resilience as it was believed that Lord Krishna himself was



the very audience for its performances. In this music practise, the essence of the song revolves around Krishna bhakti and is sung in the form of Kirtans, Bhajans and Bhava Nritya. This rich musical form is linked to the daily worship of Lord Krishna with a special kind of singing based on the principles of Pushtimarg sect started by Vaishnavite saint Vallabhacharya some 500 years ago.

Visit to Nathdwara, Srinathji temple, District Rajsamand, Rajasthan- 27th September to 30th September 2021:

The chief kirtan singer Shri Brijesh Kumavat and Pakhawaj player Shri Yashoda Nandan Kumavat of Srinathji temple in Nathdwara told us that Haveli Sangeet originated in Jatipura(Mathura) and then the music travelled from Vrindavan-Mathura to its present location Nathdwara situated in district Rajsamand,



Rajasthan. Due to oppression by the foreign invaders, Srinathji temple and the musical tradition both managed to shift its base from the place of its origin to the present location but on the way the shrine took shelter at Agra, Bharatpur, Kota and Jodhpur. At each place the stay was short except Bharatpur(Rasiyas) where the cult was worshipped for eight years and then finally moved to Nathdwara in 1728 when Rana of Mewar, Rajsinghji built the temple and extended his support in patronising the ritualistic tradition and Haveli Sangeet (temple music)being a part of the ritual gained popularity during his reign. The tradition was nurtured in Srinathji Temple in Nathdwara under the able guidance of Shri Vallabha Acharya and his disciples 'Ashtachaap' poets namely Sur Das, Kumbhan Das, Krishna Das, Paramanand Das, Cheetswami, Govindswami, Nand Das and Chaturbhuj Das. Haveli Sangeet flourished during this period and Ashtachaap kavis have immense contribution to it. These exponents composed the lyrics in braj bhasha over a period of time and they enriched the tradition with utmost care; as a result Haveli Sangeet created a special place in the gamut of Hindustani music. Since its inception Haveli Sangeet has been a part of the daily worship of Lord Krishna (worshipped as a

young boy of seven years) with musical offering (sewa) according to a set timetable of ragas. For example four seasons have four different types of rendition of music. Ragas and lyrics also vary according to different hours of the day. Shri Brijesh Kumavat said “Haveli sangeet is shabd pradhan , main emphasis is given to the lyrics of the song.”He sang a few lines..

*“Bajata mridang, ugatada Sugandh,
Taka jhenu Kuku jhenu,
Dhumukiti Dha Dhumukiti Dha,
Dhumukiti Dhumukiti, Dhilangata”...*

Shri Yashoda Nandan Kumavat further added that instruments played with Haveli sangeet in the temple are mainly jhanj, harmonium, been, sarangi and phakhawaj and during spring a few more instruments add colours to the Hori festival and they are duf, upang and kinnari.



Srinathji shrine, Nathdwara

There are at present 20 kirtankars who offer their daily seva through their rendition of kirtans following all rituals as inscribed in Pushtimarg sect to Srinathji shrine in Nathdwara. When we asked them whether modernity has touched the ancient style of singing, they replied “change is inevitable, so you can find a bit of khayal gayaki ang in Haveli sangeet nowadays.”

In order to promote and disseminate the authentic and real Haveli sangeet among the young generation, Srinathji Temple Trust Board runs a school ‘Srinath Sangeet Shikshan Kendra’ on the premises of the Temple since 2009 from 7 PM to 9 PM daily after the Shayan aarti.



Shri Deepak Kumar Sharma imparting training to students of ‘Srinath Sangeet Shikshan Kendra’, Srinathji Temple premises, Nathdwara

Shri Deepak Kumar Sharma, adhyapak of the Kendra since its inception has been teaching young boys coming from different strata

of society to the intricacies of the ancient musical tradition. It was heartening to see young admirers of Haveli sangeet taking interest in learning the music from their Guru. While talking to us during one of the class sessions on the evening of 28th September, Shri Deepak Kumar Sharma told us that the Temple Trust is doing commendable work in promoting haveli sangeet among the masses irrespective of caste and creed by imparting training to young generation. This was not the scenario before 2009 as only handful of traditional singers were the custodian of the kirtan of pushtimarg i.e. Haveli sangeet. But he lamented that Government is doing very little to promote Haveli sangeet among masses. Lot more is needed to be done to preserve this ancient style of singing. Central or State Government can lend a helping hand and save the precious musical heritage, he said.



Interview of Shri Bhagwati Prasad Gandharva (Haveli Sangeet Exponent from Baroda, Gujarat)

Q. Why this style of singing is called Haveli Sangeet?

A. In Kathiwar which is situated in Saurashtra region, mansions are called Haveli. In earlier times this devotional songs were sung by the kirtankars in mansion like temples in Saurashtra. When Shri Vallabh Das Bapudra recorded these songs in Pusthi marg sect in All India Radio for the first time, he was asked by the Producer that what title to be given for his presentation of songs, he just gave a thought and said since this music is practised and rendered in Haveli, so we can name it 'Haveli sangeet'. Since then this musical form is known by this name. As per my opinion the name should have been Pushti Bhakti Sangeet. But as All India Radio and Doordarshan have given recognition to this title, it is now difficult to change the name. But we must acknowledge that it was Shri Vallabh Das Bapudra who promoted Haveli Sangeet among the masses. Before that it was only confined within the temple walls.

Q. Tell us about the journey of Haveli Sangeet. Though it is a part of Kirtan, yet this form has Dhruvad and Dhamar as component. Kindly throw some light upon it.

A. Around five hundred years ago Shri Vallabhacharya founded Pushtimarg sect. He travelled to Braja in Jatipura and researched on Krishna's life. He offered Ashtayam seva to Srinath ji in Jatipura assisted by his son Shri Gosain ji. Their eight sevaks popularly known as ashta sakha founded Haveli sangeet. Shri Vallabhacharya assigned ashta sakha to perform seva to Srinath ji at different set of time. So they rendered the kirtana describing the leela they visualised and instantly composed the songs and performed. The tradition was basically oral as their compositions were not scripted. In order to preserve it for the future generation Shri Vallabhacharya appointed lekhakars who used to write down the lyrics that Ashtasakha created and those are preserved in book 'Kirtan ki Pustak'. In previous time

kirtankars used to sing kirtans from original manuscript (hasta likhit pustak). Nowadays these immortal compositions are available in printed text. But in Nathdwara's Srinathji temple, kirtankars use hasta likhit pustak in order to maintain the tradition with perfection and more importantly to avoid the printing mistakes that a book may carry in printed form.

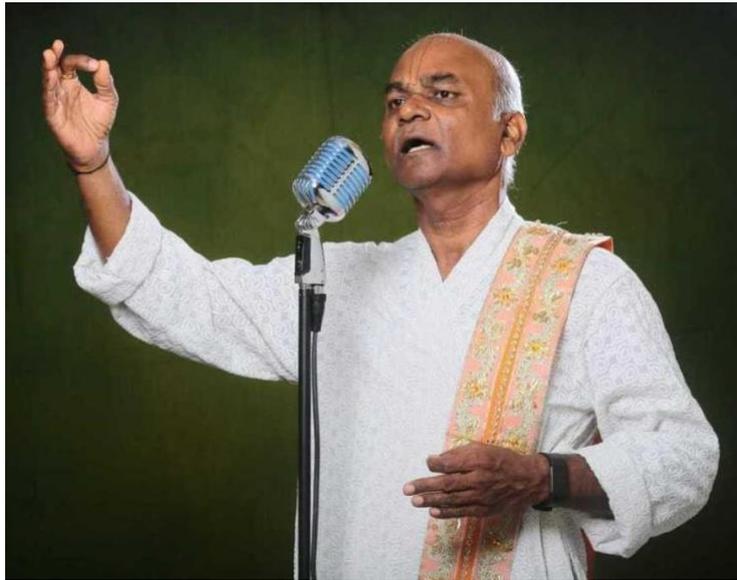
Haveli sangeet and shastriya sangeet has one major difference. The first one is bhav pradhan whereas shastriya sangeet is shastra pradhan. The aims are different; shastriya sangeet needs to follow the format of shastra and kirtan pranali of pushtimarg is bhav pradhan. Full emphasis is given to the expression (bhava) and the lyrics created by Ashtasakha. Exponents of Dhrupad & Dhamar sing the brajabhasha kirtan but they don't sing the full composition. For example a kirtan " nachhat raas main lal bihari, Nachhawat sab hain brij ki nari", the dhrupad singer will only touch one line each of Sthayi, antara, sanchari, abhog and repeat the same lines in his rendition. And unlike Haveli Sangeet, a Dhrupad recital will begin with nom tom alaap. We render the lyrics sung by Ashtasakha since the inception of haveli sangeet and create the ambience of Krishna's Rasa and immerse into the bhava completely so as to entertain the Lord with our seva.

Q. Please tell us more about Pushtimarg sect?

A. Pushti means krupa and marg means the path. So Pushtimarg means krupa ka marg (the path of grace). So as and when Thakurji bestows his blessings on us then only we get the opportunity to offer our seva to the Lord. According to Pushtimarg sect, Ashtasakha ki vani is considered as Panchamveda.

Q. What initiatives have been taken by the Government or the music practitioners to preserve the rich musical tradition and disseminate further among the future generation?

A. There is now scarcity of kirtankars in Pushtimarg temples. There are number of Pushtimarg temples in India and even in countries abroad. Temple rituals are followed as per Pushtimarg sect but gradually Haveli sangeet kirtankars are declining in numbers in these temples. Doordarshan Girnar has done commendable work in broadcasting Haveli sangeet programmes with a view to promote the form among its viewers. Mr. Svetkatu Vohra Head of programme (Music) of Girnar Doordarshan needs a special mention here who assigned programmes to renowned Haveli Sangeet exponents quite often in Girnar channel.



Shri Bhagwati Prasad Gandharva

Q. Last but not the least; kindly tell us about your association with this rich art form?

A. I am the sixth generation vocalist in my family settled in Baroda. I learnt Haveli Sangeet from my father and grandfather since my

childhood. I have been disseminating Haveli Sangeet among the young generation and my disciples learn with great interest. Now due to Covid 19 restrictions the classes have been shifted to online mode which has seen a significant rise in number of students as compared to physical mode. There are around 50 to 60 students getting training in Haveli Sangeet from me in 4 days a week.

Interview of Shri Aabharan Bawa Goswami (Musicologist and expert in Haveli Sangeet from Ahmedabad, Gujarat)

Q. Kindly tell us about the journey of Haveli sangeet from temple to the stage.

A. Basically this divine art form is a kirtan tradition in existence since sanatan era. Kirtan yane Kirti kaa gaan karna.. This tradition was developed and nurtured by Vishnu Swami Acharya some 2500 years ago. After that Shankaracharya founded Advaita followed by Dvaita and Dvaitadvait Schools of Philosophy by other propounders. After Vishnu Swami Acharya , great philosopher and guru Bilva Mangalacharya had immense contribution to the propagation of Vaishnav tradition that focussed on the worship of Krishna. He wrote Govind Damodar Stotra and Krishna Karanamrita and those Kirtans are still rendered in the temples of South India and in North India and other places where Vallabhacharya tradition is in practise.

Mahakavi Jaydev , the writer of Geeta Govinda also belonged to the lineage of Vishnu Swami sampraday.

Vallabhacharya, the founding philosopher and guru of Vallabha Sampradaya (Pushtimarg) propounded Shuddadvaita which is different from Advaita philosophy of Shankaracharya. It was Vallabhacharya who started the tradition of Kirtan gaan in Srinathji temple in Nathdwara around 550 years ago and this tradition of singing Kirtan for thakurji in Nathdwara is still in practise. Gradually as Pushtimarg parampara expanded in other regions of India, Haveli Sangeet also gained momentum alongwith the Vallabhacharya tradition. 'Haveli sangeet' was named in early 1950 when Government Organisations and All India Radio came into existence. In Saurashtra's Kathiyawar region, mansions like temples are called Haveli. So the Kirtan performed in these temples is called Haveli sangeet. This is a Shastriya parampara as references of swar jati and other elements have been taken from Bharata Muni's Natya Shastra.

Now when we talk about the stage presentation of Haveli Sangeet, in my opinion our life is full of dynamism. We see changes from time to time in every sphere of our life. With passage of time transformations have taken place not on the basis of tradition but in way of presenting it before the audience. For example our voice modulation is normally set in such a manner that we don't require microphone when we are singing before Thakurji in the temple but for public performance there arises the need to understand the technique of voice culture.

Singing Haveli Sangeet to entertain the lord is an age old tradition; when we sing in the temple before the deity it is called sammukhgaan and when a kirtan mandali sing in a congregation in satsang it is called Kirtan Samaj. Now we can see lot of presentations of Haveli sangeet in Kirtan samaj format on stage. But according to me there is lot more scope to establish Haveli Sangeet as a part of

Indian Performing Art. We need to make efforts and generate awareness among the audience for that.



Shri Aabharan Bawa Goswami

Q. Do you see the interest among audience towards Haveli Sangeet?

A. Yes, people express their willingness to enhance their knowledge on Haveli Sangeet. But the problem is that original form is not reaching out to them. At some places it is sung with a blend of khayal style and somewhere with a mix of folk music. Even in the audition procedure of Haveli Sangeet in Akashvani, experts from other genre of music are assigned as the judges. So the actual Haveli sangeet experts are excluded from the system. As a result the authentic and real music is not reaching out to the listeners. So it's a fact now that sanatan parampara is fading away slowly. It is very important for audience to understand that Haveli Sangeet is basically a Bhakti Sangeet. Divinity is the core essence of this form of music. They should not come with a mind set to listen to the laykari , taanbaazi, ladhant bhadant of classical music. Thakurji ke samne ham aise hi

gaate hain, unke sammukh apne gale ki harkat ya apni vidvata kya batana..

Q. In your opinion how the new generation should be encouraged to listen to this divine music in its original form?

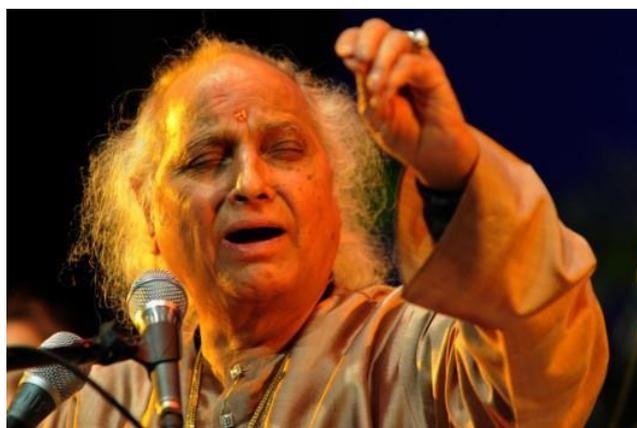
A. Workshops and performances should be organised among public and in music faculties. We need to change the mindset of the audience. They should understand that Haveli Sangeet is a basic form. Every performing art has a basic raw form and then with passage of time it is developed into some other style. Likewise khayal and dhrupad singing evolved from its basic form and that is Haveli sangeet. Other forms like Thumri, Chaiti, Kajri, Jhula, Dadra all developed from the ancient Haveli Sangeet style. Haveli sangeet ke praband se hi hua hain inka vikas. So we need to understand this basic form and treat the music in its pristine form and should not twist and turn it according to one's need. In my opinion, ashrams and temple trusts should encourage the kirtankars with incentives and boost up their morals so as to preserve the age old tradition. Government also needs to give special attention to Haveli Sangeet artists, otherwise the tradition will gradually become extinct. As I mentioned earlier this music is actually the basic form of almost all forms of Hindustani Classical music. Bhakti and Shringara are two main rasa components we can find significantly in Haveli sangeet. So we can say chaiti, thumri, dadra, all evolved from this music. We need to create a platform where discussions can be held and if we dive deep into the subject we can get more resource for research on the subject.

Q. Do you disseminate this art form among young generation and do you feel they are capable enough to carry forward the legacy?

A. As a musician, I would say that we need to work very hard to get the attention of the listeners, and being a religious preacher, many followers come to me who are eager to learn Haveli Sangeet for their soul satisfaction (atma kalyan) and they really learn the music seriously. As far as Haveli Sangeet as a cultural study is concerned, I feel personally, we need to give significant importance to this subject. I think for this we should form a concrete organisation which would safeguard the interest of the kirtaniyas and work for the promotion and propagation of Haveli Sangeet. I know many talented musicians who are now starving. They are forced to adapt other ways of living. Some are changing jobs to earn a livelihood and many of them are switching to other genre of music like khayal and dhrupad. So in all manners ultimately it is a loss to Haveli sangeet. Earlier royal dynasties used to patronise the artists, hence the art was alive but now there is an urgent need to provide financial support to these artists and save the art from dying out.

Q. Do you see any followers of Haveli Sangeet in other countries?

A. Yes, there are many. Pandit Jasraj had trained his disciples in Haveli sangeet style of music. Perhaps, he is the only artist in Hindustani classical style who has acknowledged Haveli sangeet as the main source of Indian Classical music and encouraged his students to learn music in original form.



Pandit Jasraj

But there are only a few artists who acknowledge it. Though musicians would sing Pyare pag vale or Ban Thhan kaha chale Laal but they never sing the chhap of Nand Das, Sur Das or Paramananda Das. It is painful to see that musicians don't show minimum courtesy to the compositions of Ashtasakha, creators of Haveli Sangeet. Jab apne gharane ki baat aati hain to apni kaan khichke ustad ke naam bolenge...ye ek vaitha hain..

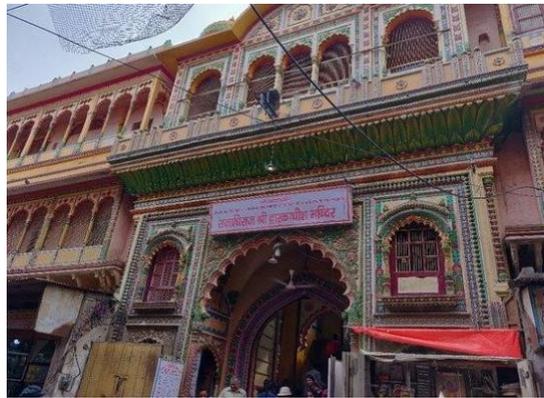
However, Haveli sangeet tradition is in practise in Srinathji temple in Nathdwara as part of the temple ritual but there are only few who understand the aesthetic of the musical style. So we have to work on three fronts to spread awareness –Firstly Artists to preserve the authenticity, secondly Government/Cultural Organisations to patronise the art and lastly Audience also has a prominent role to play in safeguarding the rich & age old tradition. They must understand that this art form is not a source of entertainment so this ancient art should be preserved in a way that it should not lose its identity.

Q. You are an expert on Haveli sangeet engaged in research studies on the subject. How you were inclined towards this art form?

A. I belong to the 16th generation lineage of Vallabhacharya. Basically I am a religious preacher and Music is my passion. Since childhood I used to sing kirtan accompanying the kirtankars and played various types of musical instruments. And since I was born in the illustrious family of Vallabhacharya, I grew up reading Vedas and Upanishads and other shastras alongside the modern education.

When I grew a little older I started analysing the theory I read in shastras and the practical training I got in music. I have received training in Hindustani music in Guru Shishya parampara for 12 long years and after that I did Masters and M Phil in Music and now pursuing a PhD in music. I have even completed BBA (Bachelor in Business Administration) degree before venturing into music talim. But I decided to follow my passion in life which is music.

Visit to Shree Dwarkadhish temple in Mathura, Uttar Pradesh on 9th November 2021:



The Haveli Sangeet tradition which was nurtured & flourished in Braj, is no longer popular in the temples of Vrindavan & Mathura. Hardly any temple in Braj promotes Haveli Sangeet. Dwarkadhish temple which was built around 250 years ago by Vitthal Natha is the only temple in Mathura at present where Haveli sangeet is part of the daily ritual. Shri Govind Lal Chaturvedi is the only singer who is offering seva in the temple for the past 23 years. He belongs to the third generation of kirtankars. He laments that the present generation is no more interested to carry the legacy forward and sing for the Lord. “My children are settled in Dubai and pursuing different careers.” Shri Rakesh Tiwari, Prabhari of Dwarkadhish Temple Trust says, “The younger generation has little patience for sadhana and riyaz that Haveli Sangeet requires. At the time of T20 cricket

matches, no one is interested to watch Test crickets. Once Swami Hari Das started the musical tradition in Braj but now that 'sangeet' has vanished from the temples. Though Nimbkacharya and Radha Ballabh sects do have 'Samaj Gayan' on special occasions, but generally the temple musical traditions are on the decline in Braj."

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