

# Compositions of Ustad Zahoor Khan (Ramdass)

By

Nirmala Joshi

**U**STAD Zahoor Khan was well known in his time both as a great musician and scholar of music. His name is still revered by the musicians of this generation, but very few perhaps know that he was a great composer too. The versatility and prodigiousness of his creative genius may be gauged from the fact that he composed about 4000 songs. These compositions (which in manuscript form are with his son, Ustad Altaf Khan) cover an extensive variety of musical forms such as *Dhrupad*, *Khayals*, *Thumaris*, *Prabandhs*, *Taranas* and *Bhajans*. Written in chaste Hindi, these songs are mostly in praise of God and nature, and vividly reflect the composer's religious bent of mind. It is unfortunate that out of about 4000, only 400 compositions are musically preserved with Ustad Altaf Khan.

## Family

Ustad Zahoor Khan's family originally belonged to Simrongarh and afterwards moved to Dankaur near Sikandarabad in U. P. bordering on Delhi. It was Jodhe Khan who decided to settle at Dankaur. Subsequently his son Imam Khan shifted to Khurja. Imam Khan took up service at Rampur under Nawab Asaf Jah, grand-father of the famous Nawab Kalbe-Ali-Khan, where the renowned Bare Shah Khan was court musician. Imam Ali became a pupil of Bare Shah Khan from whom he learnt *Dhrupad* and *Hori* which he passed on to his son, Ghulam Husain Khan, in the traditional way. Somehow Ghulam Husain preferred Khurja to Rampur and came back to the parental home where his son, the illustrious Zahoor Khan, was born.

## Zahoor Khan

From early childhood Zahoor Khan was studious and quiet by nature. As he grew up he developed a religious outlook and lived a simple and austere life. He was a man of simple habits and humble nature. It is said that Haddu Khan of Gwalior was desirous of marrying his daughter to Altaf Khan. Son of Zahoor Khan. But the alliance was not accepted by Zahoor Khan. He sent word to Haddu Khan, that "*Kambalpar dushale ka paiband kya lagega*" (I am a coarse blanket, can't be a patch on a shawl).

Despite repeated requests from various States, Zahoor Khan never took up service anywhere and politely refused the offers by saying that he had already accepted the service of "Allah". Students would come to him from far off places to learn music. His main source of income was tuition fees from pupils or what he earned from occasional visits to various courts on special invitations and he shared this income with his needy pupils. Most of his time was spent in reading, writing, teaching and in prayer.

Zahoor Khan was also a poet of considerable merit. His pen-name in Urdu was "Mumkin" and in Hindi "Ramdass". His published works in Urdu include among others *Nazzara-e-Mumkin*, *Deenar-e-Chashmai-Faiz*, *Diwan-e-Gham*, and *Masnavi-a-Lal-o-Gohar*. Zahoor Khan spent most of his time at Bareilly, where he had a few intimate friends, of whom one was Choubeji, a Sanskrit scholar, from whom he learnt Sanskrit. Two others were Babu Tribeni Prasad and Baldeo Prasad,

both deeply interested in literature and music. Whenever, Zahoor Khan set his compositions to music, he would expose them to the critique of his three intimate friends and would feel satisfied with his work only after obtaining their approval. Zahoor Khan was also versed in Persian and has translated many works in Urdu.

Zahoor Khan had a striking personality and was always surrounded by scholars, musicians and students, who came to him for advice and discussion on various aspects of music. To them he was a Pandit and *Gayak*. Unfortunately, we have no photograph of the grand old man. As a devout Muslim he was averse to having himself photographed.

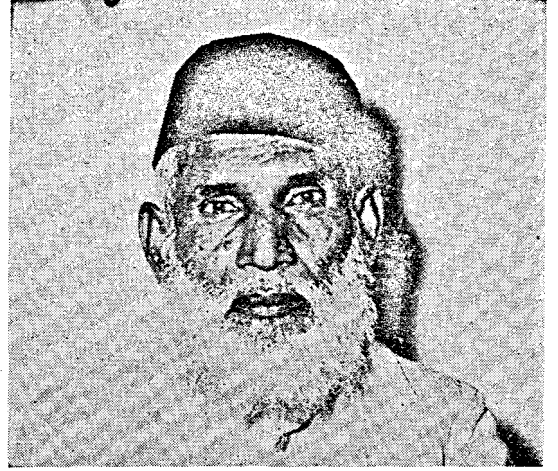
#### Ustad Altaf Khan

I have had the privilege of knowing for the last 15 years Ustad Altaf Khan, the son of Zahoor Khan, and have also had the rare honour of learning the compositions of "Ramdass", but the Ustad had made me promise that I would not mention this to any one nor would I reproduce the compositions. Fortunately after eight years of constant persuasion I have been able to get his permission to publish this selection of songs with translations. He also permitted me to record the songs for the Archives of the Akademi. This selection will give some idea of Zahoor Khan's profound knowledge. I cherish the great hope that I shall be able to bring out in future a monograph of the compositions of Zahoor Khan with notations. I trust this monograph will stimulate further research and eminent musicologists will study with interest the works of this great composer who has so far remained obscure merely because he was an unambitious and unassuming man. I am deeply indebted to Ustad Altaf Khan for giving me the permission to produce these.

#### प्रबन्ध-केदारा-त्रिताल

गिदिगिनधा धिनता कितक किडानधा, धुंगनाकित  
धाधा कितक, तक धुमकित तक, नगधेत् तगधेत्  
तगधेत्, धिरकित तक धेत्, तगधेत तगधेत, तक तक,  
धुंग नुंग, नुंग, नुंग धुंग नुंग, नुंग, नुंग, धिकित तकित  
तक, किडान धा ॥

कतित तानधा, गिदिगिनधा, कृधित्, धिकित तक,  
धिधिकित तक धुमकित तक, किडान कत्ती किडनग,



Ustad Altaf Khan

नग तिरिकित तक धिरिकित तक, नग तिरिकित तक,  
तक धिरिकित तक, धिकित तकित तक क्रान्धा, क्रान्धा,  
गिदिगिन धा धा ॥

गीत छन्द घोर प्रबन्ध, धुरपद संगीत को मृदंग  
अलंकार होत है। जाने रामदास भोग दियो ॥ ये प्रबन्ध  
नवयुक्त रीत भांति को बनायो गायो पा पा सां, रें सां  
नि घ प, पां पां मडरे सा, सारे सारे धनि धरें,  
सा नि घ प ॥

#### Praband-Kedara-Titala

Gidigin dha dhinta kittak kiran dha tag dhet  
tag dhet dhungana kit

Dha dha kit tak, tak dhum kit tak, nag dhit,  
Dhir kit tag dhen, tag dhen tag dhen, tak  
tak, dhung nung, nung nung

Dhung nung, nung nung, dhikit takit tak  
kridan dha.

Katit tan dha, gidi gin dha, kridhit,  
dhikit tak

Dhidhikit tak dhumkit tak, kiddhan katti  
kidnag

Naga tirikit tak, dhirikat tak, nag tirikit tak,  
tak dhirkit

Tak, dhikit takit tak krandha krandha  
gidgin dhadha.

Git chhand dhok prabandh, dhurpad sangeet  
ko mridang

Alankar hot hai. Jane Ramdas bhog diyo.

Ye prabandh nav yukta rit bhanti ko banayo  
Gayo pa pa sa, re, sa, ni dha pa, pa pa pa  
Ma S re Sa Sare Sare dha ni dha re sa ni dha pa.

## मारवा—सूल

ध म् नी रेऽ, गमगरे, निरेनिरे, गमगरे सा, रें नी  
ध म, रेग ग, मगरे निरेग, नीरेंगरे निधम । नि नि  
धम धऽ, मऽ ध, नीऽरें, मधनिरे, धरें निध, धम निध रें  
नि गंरे निधमगरेसा । निऽरे-गऽ म धमगरेसा ऽ ध ॥  
वादी अनुवादी विवादी समवादी उदात् अनुदात् स्वरित  
पुलित में तानमान, और उपज कठिन होत है । आरोही  
को अवरोही का तीवर में कोमल प्रकाश रामदास तव  
गुनियन में कीरत पावे । नीनिध, मधरे निनिधनिरे  
मधरें-मधरें-निधमगरेसा ।

### Marwa Sool

Dha ma ni res, ga ma ga re, ni re ni re, gama  
ga re sa.  
Re ni dha ma, re ga ga, ma ga re, ni re ga,  
ni re ga re ni dha ma.  
Ni ni dha ma, dha s masdha, ni s re ma dha  
ni re, dha re, ni dha.  
Dha ma ni dha re ni ni ga re ni dha ma ga re  
sa, ni s re s ga s ma  
Dha ma ga re sa s dha.  
Vadi Anuvadi Vivadi Samvadi Udat Anudat  
Swarit, pulin me, tan man, aur upaj kathin  
Kot Hai, Arohi Ko Avarohi Kar tivar me  
Komal prakash Ramdas tav guniyan men  
Kirat pave ninidha ma dha re  
Nini dha ni re ma dha re—me dha re—  
Ni dha ma ga re sa.

## खम्माज त्रिवट ताल त्रिताला

धा तिट कृधातिट, कृधान धा, कृधातिट धा—  
धा धा धुम किट, तकिटतका तक, किटता  
गिदिगिनधा—किटता गिदिगिन धा, किटता गिदिगिनधा ।  
किङना धित्ता, दींग तक, किङधितता, नि सा, रेगरे, सारे,  
निसारे, सानिध, धाधा किटतक धुमकिट धा,  
निसा गम पधनिसा रें रें कृन्धा क्रान्धा ।

### Khammaj Trivat—Tal Titala

Dha tit kri dha tit, kridhan dha, kridha  
tit dha—  
Dha dha dhum kit, takit taka tak, kit ta  
gid gin dha—  
Kit ta gidi gin dha, kitta gid gin dha.  
Kirna dhita, ding tak, kir dhita, ni sa, re ga  
re, sa re,

Ni sa re, sa ni dha, dha dha kit tak dhum  
kit dha,  
Ni sa gama pa dha ni sa re re krindha krindha.

## गौड़ सारंग, होरी

होरी खेलत हैं नंद लाल संग वृजवाल  
तक तक मारत पिचकारी मुख में  
और लेत जोवन रस  
शोश नवाय कोउ पइयां परत हैं  
कोउ कहन हम चेरी तिहारी  
मन चाहे सो करो कुंवर  
परी तुमरे बस  
प्रात समय गोवन छाड़त नाहीं  
पिरात है देह और दूखत नस नस ।  
रामदास नेक तुमही न्याय करो  
रैन भई शशि निकस आयो  
और बीतो दिवस ।

### Gaur Sarang, Hori

With the maids of Brij  
The Son of Nanda plays Hori.  
He aims the syringe at their faces  
And revels in the sallies of youth.  
With bowed head one of them  
Falls at his feet.  
Another tells him, "Yours slaves we are,  
Treat us in whatever way  
You like!  
In your power we are, O Lord."  
"Our bodies ache and so do our nerves."  
O Lord, says Ramdas, "why not be fair?  
The day is passed, it is now night  
And the moon has come out,  
Since the morning the cows  
have not gone to the pasture."

### तिलक कामोद—भूप

सकल दुख हरन सदानंद ।  
घर घर प्रकट जगत ईश  
अलख अमर अगम जल ।  
जगपति विपति खंडन  
अगतिन को गति देत  
सुख दायक विघन अति प्रवल ।  
ऐसे कृपाल सों दूर रहत हूं  
निसि वासर को कैसे परत कल ।

रामदास तू मूर्ख शठ अधम क्रूर  
तेरो साहब तोको याद करत रहत पल पल ।

**Tilak Kamode—Jhap**

Destroyer of woes and the spring of gaiety,  
Dweller of all hearts  
And protector of the world.  
Immortal, unknowable  
and beyond mortal vision.  
Lord of the universe  
and saviour from calamity.  
Giving salvation to those  
Deprived of it.  
Promoter of happiness  
at the time of great misfortune.  
Away from such benefactor  
there is no peace, no respite to me  
Says Ramdas, the ignorant, naughty,  
wicked and unkind.  
Even then the Lord forever  
keeps me in mind!

**शहाना (बना)—भूपताल**

सुधर सलोना बना बन आयो  
नर-नारिन को जिया हुलसानो ।  
नवल जोवन नव तरंग तरुण गात  
अंग-अंग दुलहिन के मन मानो ।  
मदन मैन की बरात लिए संग  
मन मोहन और सुंदर सयानो ।  
रामदास बाकी देख-देख छवि  
सरस सरस गावत है शहानो ।

**Sahana (Bana)—Jhaptal**

The bridegroom comes  
well-adorned and charming.  
Men and women  
are thrilled with delight,  
Fresh youth, fresh vigour  
and his form in full bloom,  
Enrapturing the heart of  
the lovely, young bride.  
Like the enchanting cupid  
the bridal procession leading.  
The bridegroom comes  
well-adorned and charming.  
Watching his lovely form  
Ramdas is stirred  
Into singing the 'Shahana'  
thrilling and sweet.  
The following is a well-known composition  
he learnt from his Guru Shaheb Khan.

**गौरी—सूल**

बनन लागी हो—  
कछु और दिनन ते आज ।  
चटक दरशन उनके धाम  
अब मेरे आवत बानन, कबहुं ना कीनो  
याकी देख छवि  
ऐसे कौन के धाम ।

**Gauri—Sool**

Dressed up she is to-day  
O lovelier than other days.  
Radiant she is now  
for whom expectant?  
Not for me, never was  
Such gorgeous adornment.  
Whom do they beckon  
these looks, this radiance ?

The following is one of his last compositions.

भूपताल में मल्हार—एक प्रकार का मेघ  
बादर छाए बरखत वे कू  
गरज गरज कर विरहन डराये  
घोर घोर सुन बादर की  
अब छतियां मोरी घरकी  
रामदास पिया विदेश छाए ।

**Malhar in Jhaptal—A Kind of Megha**

Clouds spread over the sky  
about to burst into showers.  
Flashing and thundering  
they frighten the young beloved.  
O! hearing the roar and thunder of clouds  
my breasts quiver.  
Ramdas says my lover is away  
in a far-off land ?

**बहार—तिताला—खयाल**

फूलन की लतान प्यारी प्यारी  
तामैं हसत लसत पहर पहर बसंती सारी  
दुम दुम भूम भूम रामदास लहलहात  
फूल फूल प्रफुलित बयारी ।

**Bahar—Titala—Khyal**

Lovely is the green shrubbery  
in flowers abounding.  
As if in yellow apparel  
glowing and laughing.  
Trees drooping in intoxication  
and blossoming.  
Says Ramdas in rapturous glee  
the garden is blooming.