

Conclusion:

Primitive music underwent evolution in every century and Music became more and more sophisticated. From the *Samuha gaan* (Group singing) of the Vedic period till the solo singing of today, Music experienced changes from diverse angles. A continuous history of this change is observed. In the Vedic period, the influence of Literature on music was more prominent than the root elements of music. The applications of music included praising deities, describing Nature, spirituality and other forms of singing which in present time has gone far beyond, become increasingly for enjoyment and branched out into several forms of singing. Classical, semi-classical and Light music include several varieties within these genres that express human emotion and developed in that direction. Ancient music was more faithful to the word, which today went to become also music-oriented and even purely music oriented. Music got more and more stylized and its forms of singing developed. The influence of Literature in ancient music lessened in Classical Music. There used to be compositions full of words or just a tune which was improvised in the modern period to become a raga composition, e.g. *Dhrupad*, *Khayal*, and *Thumri*, wherein there are unlimited opportunities for improvisation. In the modern era, the influence of words lessened and Music was liberated in a true sense. In the context of classical music, *jaati* and *Prabandh* singing saw more influence of Literature and less Music, in *Dhrupad*, both were equal, and today, in *Khayal* or *Thumri*, there is more influence of Music and less of Literature. This is how change occurred.

In *Dhrupad*, as the word and Literature were of equal importance, at the beginning expanded Raga *aalaap* or later *Sthayi*, *antara*, *sanchari* and *aabhog* were four divisions in which compositions were made. In *Khayal*, before *Bandish* expansion of *raga* became limited but the tradition of expanding the raga in just 4-5 lines of just the *sthai* and *antara*. In this manner, music was no longer oriented around the word but became self-sufficient. On account of the elements of improvisation, first *Vaanis* and later the concept of *Khayal gharanas* came into existence. *Samuh gayan* for Music is mentioned in the Vedas, which changed to solo singing in the modern period. In every period the practical and theoretical aspects evolved and developed and related works were created.

Tunes and songs were changed to stylized forms of song. Improvisation led to the stylization of song and music and the raga system developed, wherein lay inexhaustible scope for creativity.

1) Apparently, the Agra *gharana* is the oldest with an unbroken recorded history from Nayak Gopal of 13th century (take 3/4 generations before Haji Sujan Khan 1455-1538 A.D.). The musical lineage of the Agra *gharana* is in itself a matter of great pride. The continuity of the tradition and its heritage remained intact through diverse socio-political changes over the centuries on account of the efforts of the musicians within the *gharana*.

2) There were four stages in the evolution of the Agra *gharana*:

a) Gopal Nayak to Haji Sujan Khan – a predominantly *Prabandha* and *Dhrupad* tradition

b) Haji Sujan Khan to Ghagge Khudabux – *Dhrupad* tradition

c) Ghagge Khudabux to Faiyaz Khan – *Khayal* music with influence of *Dhrupad*

d) Faiyaz Khan to present generation of musician – *Dhrupad*-ized *Khayal* music with influence of other *gharanas* that merged into the Agra *gharana*.

This history clearly shows that the musicians wholeheartedly passed on the wealth of musical heritage to the next generation.

3) Over the last 550 years (after Haji Sujan Khan), the musicians of the Agra *gharana* witnessed change in the styles of singing. From *Dhrupads* of *Nauhar Bani*, they embraced the *Khayal* singing, *Khusravi Khayal*, *Koul-Kalwana*, *Thumri*. With the changes in time and the taste of the audiences, musicians also began practicing and singing various genres of classical and semi classical styles. Therefore, they were able to learn, practice, preserve and pass on the various genres of music such as *Dhrupad*, *Dhamar*, *Sadhra*, *Bengi Dhrupad*, *Langda Dhrupad*, *Khayal*, *Khusravi Khayal*, *Thumri*, *Tappa*, *Tarana*, *Koul-Kalwana* to the next generations.

4) Despite being traditional orthodox *Dhrupad* singers, they openheartedly accepted the *Khayal* genre and blended the '*Bol Banav*' of *Nauhar Bani* into the *Khayal* of Gwalior

and gifted the prodigiously multidimensional Agra *gharana* of the *Khayal* to Indian Music.

5) One the most interesting discoveries is that *Khayal* gayaki was always practiced in Agra *gharana* simultaneously with the Gwalior *gharana*, which is the oldest *khayal* tradition. However, *khayal bandishes* by some artistes of the Agra *gharana* and the collections of the oldest composers of *bandishes* found only in the Agra *gharana* including Sadarang, Adarang and Manrang lead us to conclude that the Agra *gharana* of *khayal* music is just as old as Gwalior *gharana*. Because the Agra artistes were Dhrupad singers, and at the time singing *Khayal* was considered inferior to singing Dhrupad, they did not make stage presentations of *Khayal* music. That led to the erroneous belief that Agra artistes trained in *Khayal* in the Gwalior *gharana* and that none of the other *gharanas* had a tradition of *Khayal* music.

5) Several other *gharanas* such as Sikandara, Rangeela, Khurja, Mathura, Atrauli and so on merged into the Agra *gharana* and it became richer over the decades.

6) The musicians earned acclaim in the various princely states and courts of the country including Agra, Mathura, Gwalior, Tonk, Jaipur, Rampur, Indore, Baroda, Jodhpur, Bikaner, Mysore, Riva, Bharatpur, Alwar, Kashmir, Kolhapur, and Patiala. They mesmerized the royalty and the masses of music lovers of all these regions.

7) Although the musicians of Agra *gharana* put a premium on informal techniques and individualistic approach in teaching, they did develop certain formal methodologies. A characteristic unique to this *gharana* is the training imparted in the 18 *Ang* for complete presentation of Dhrupad and *Khayal*. This training was used to enrich the improvisation and elaboration of the raga and the *bandish* to ensure a rich experience for the audience.

8) Dhrupad style is considered to be very systematic. Agra *gharana's Khayal* singers made it the base on which to create their own singing style. For this reason, under oath, they cared for the principles of classical music with great commitment and without any compromising. In the *shruti*-rich singing of the *nom-tom aalaap* of Dhrupad *Ang*, instead of expanding the *Merukhand* with each note, they preserved the *Raagaang* of North Indian Music by placing a premium on *Ragaalaap*. They put to good use the *Rupak*

Aalaap through their *bandishes*, also using *bol banav*, *bol baant*, *layakari* according to the sentiment of the lyrics of the *bandishes*, and employed all the 18 *Angs* as and when required during training. *Taans* hamper the purity of a raga. However, the artistes of this *gharana* made use of *Raagaang* even there, and delivered on their oath of keeping the purity of ragas intact. In the last century, purity of the ragas and discipline were ignored and importance was given only to readiness of the voice and improvisation, but the artistes of *Agra gharana* always stayed away from such negligence.

9) There are two main parts of the presentation of a raga: *Raga Aalaap* and *Bandish*. *Agra* artistes emphasized the importance of the notes and *laya* in both and set a new precedent. Although *Khayal* is a modern form of singing, the *Dhrupad Ang* was beautifully woven into it to create novelty in tradition. The *bandish* was treated as a theme, and it was dramatically expanded with amazing innovation by the artistes of the *Agra gharana*. In singing a *bandish*, they exhibited a prodigious talent for weaving together the words with the *layakari*, giving various soulful examples to Music. They created the necessary techniques of *taal* and *laya* for the purpose. In retaining the awareness of the audience continuously, mastery of the *laya* – in addition to that of the *swaras* – contributes greatly. The importance of *laya* and *taal* and the mastery of these two aspects ensured great popularity for the artistes of the *Agra gharana*.

10) As a part of their oath, they devotedly maintained the dignity of the performance with the help of precise phrases, ease of expression, consistency in musical forms, graceful yet powerful renditions and a creative approach. They never spared best efforts in ensuring the purity of Ragas and discipline of *Dhrupad* and *Khayal* traditions, in their renditions.

After the analysis of more than a thousand compositions from various sources such as recordings, books, private collections and interviewing some of leading maestros and disciples of this *gharana*, I have been able to achieve the following findings and conclusion.

1) Any creation in Indian classical music can be mainly in three areas:

a) *Raga*

b) Compositions

c) *Talas*

Agra *gharana* musicians worked with all these three aspects and created a great number of beautiful Ragas, *Bandishes* and *Talas*. Within these form many colorful varieties and creations and its quantity is simply amazing. Such creations became a strong point of this *gharana*. Many vocalists and instrumentalists were inspired and started performing the creations of this *gharana*.

2) From the conversations and interviews with various scholars, Pandits and Ustads of Music, I got to know that the several popular Ragas of Indian classical Music are either creations of Agra *gharana* or they were popularized or first presented by Agra *gharana*. Some of the best creations of the *gharana* are as follows:

Traditional: *Jog, Barwa, Jhinjhoti, Khemkalyan, Shyam Kalyan, Khambavati, Gorakh Kalyan, Nand, Rageshree, Nat Bihag, Purva* etc.

New and very popular: *Jogkauns, Salag varali, Kusumi Kalyan, Ahiravati, Mangal Bhairav*.

3) Agra *gharana* artistes preserved and accumulated very rare Ragas from their ancestors and from the masters of the various *gharanas* that merged into it. Musicians like S. N. Ratanjankar, K.G. Ginde, Dinkar Kaikini, Sharafat Hussain, Yunus Hussain Khan etc. popularized *Carnatic* Ragas in North Indian music style. *Carnatic* Ragas popularized or brought into North Indian classical music by Agra *gharana* are:

Narayani, Charukeshi, Kirwani, Poorva Kalyan, Abhogi, Malaymarutam, Nat Bhairavi, Manoranjani, Hansdhwani, Vachaspati etc.

Composers like S. N. Ratanjankar, Dinkar Kaikini composed *Carnatic* music varieties based on Indian Ragas.

4) Agra *gharana* has been a storehouse of a wide range of rare ragas and *bandishes* - including varieties of *Nat, Bilawal, Kanada, Malhar, Bhairav, Sarang, Kalyan, Gauri, Dhanashree* and many more. Their repertoire comprises many other independent ragas as

well as many *Jod Ragas*, *Mishra Ragas* and *Sankirna Ragas*. These *Ragas* were not only meticulously preserved, but as a part of creative thought process, many new and beautiful phrases within the raga were identified or created and new dimensions were given to them.

5) Based on various principles of 'Creations of new *Ragas*', many musicians of this *gharana* created a great number of new *Ragas*, particularly in the last century. The creation of new compositions has been found to be a very normal practice since Haji Sujan Khan. It is observed that almost all musicians composed new compositions and then dedicated them to their ancestors. On account of this tradition, a vast cache of *bandishes* was gifted to the world of music by this *gharana*. Some of the *bandishes* even served as the identity of their respective ragas. Many ragas were considered substitutes for these *bandishes*. Literally thousands of *bandishes* based on raga and laya-taal were created. These *bandishes* were composed in forms such as *dhrupad*, *dhamar*, *saadraa*, *khayal* to semi-classical compositions such as *thumri*, *tarana* and *tappa*. Raga and bandish compositions were created in various *taals* for artistes of the concert as well as university scholars in forms such as *Lakshangeet*, *Sargam geet*, group songs, patriotic songs, prayers, and songs of praise.

6) Musicians of the Agra *gharana* did not limit their role to simply on-stage performance but went on to contribute at the intellectual in making new creations, presenting old creations in new style, teaching them deliberately to their students, and inspiring students to carry on the path of musical innovation and creativity.

7) As with ragas, creative changes in the old *talas*, creation of new *talas*, as with *jod* ragas the creation of *jod talas* – such were the unprecedented experiments carried out. *Bandishes* were created as per the meter of the newly created *talas*. In addition to performance, ongoing creativity was their ideal, goal and nature. On account of this, Music received unprecedented compositions. These were adopted by artistes of all *gharanas* as well as ordinary students of Music.

About 1853, the celebrated musician, Sher Khan, first migrated to Mumbai from Agra. He was then the most respected representative of the Agra *gharana*. Since then to the end

of the last century, Agra *gharana* musicians dominated the Indian classical musical scene in India. In this chapter, an analysis of the major figures of the Agra *gharana* helped me derive very interesting facts as to how they could influence the musical scene in India over more than a century. It is important to note here the reasons for the India-wide reach of this *gharana*:

a) Emergence of most popular performing artistes such as - Natthan Khan, Bhaskarbua Bakhale, Faiyaz Khan, Sharafat Hussain Khan, Latafat Hussain Khan, Master Krishnarao Phulambrikar, Dilipchandra Vedi and many more.

b) Most respected Gurus and Performers such as - Vilayat Hussain khan, Ata Hussain Khan, S N Ratanjankar, Dilipchandra Vedi, Master Krishnarao Phulambrikar, Khadim Hussain Khan, Jagannathbua Purohit, Gajananbua Joshi, Jitendra Abhisheki and their countless disciples and followers.

c) Academicians-plus-Gurus and their work at the Universities, academic Institutions were - S N Ratanjankar, Yunus Hussain Khan, Shafi Ahmed Khan, Ghulam Rasool Khan, Dinkar Kaikini, Sumati Mutatkar, S C R Bhat, K G Ginde, Madhusudan Joshi, and many more.

Faiyaz Khan was the most highly acclaimed artiste of not only the *gharana* but was in general an iconic figure of North Indian music in the last century. His endless experimentation in performances spanned various genres ranging from the most orthodox and traditional Dhrupad genre to the then most modern form of *Ghazals*. Hence, he could become the most revered and sought-after musician of both the masses and the connoisseurs. It is hardly surprising then that he was recognized as the musician of the century.

Vilayat Hussain Khan was a guru of unparalleled caliber. His in-depth knowledge of the ancient art of music, huge repertoire of *Ragas* and *Bandishes*, and dedication toward promotion of ancient Art music attracted most talented youngsters of his time, who later gained name and fame. This included female students of very respectable family, which was uncommon in those days. Most of his disciples further carried forward his legacy with the sincerest missionary zeal and promoted the Agra *gharana*.

S. N. Ratanjankar was a multifaceted musician. His talent as a performer, Guru, Administrator, academician, composer, and musicologist was truly amazing. He produced a series of followers and pupils who followed in his footsteps and equally contributed to Indian music on a very large scale. His contribution to the complete revival and systemization of All-India Radio and efforts to give a platform to all deserving traditional and non-traditional artistes was amazing. Because of his vision and administrative ability, Indian classical music could spread all over India.

We can see the diversity within the *gharana* in terms of style of various, aesthetic approaches, voice projection, use of Ragas, *Bandishes* and *talas* and overall style of performance, creations and contributions. The stylistics Agra *gharana* could be divided in six main branches viz.:

i) *Bhaskarbuwa Bakhale* ii) *Faiyaz Khan branch* iii) *Atta Hussain Khan* iv) *Vilayat Hussain* v) *S. N. Ratanjankar* v) *Jagannathbua Purohit* vi) *Khadim Hussain Khan* vii) *Azmat Hussain Khan* viii) *Gajananbuwa Joshi*

After analyzing their personalities and contribution, we can say that Agra *gharana* vocalists passed on their knowledge extensively outside the family. Many non-family musicians and disciples from non-musical background were trained by the Agra masters, who in turn spread further the legacy of the Agra *gharana* not only the traditional way but also in an institutional mode of training. In this manner, we find several direct disciples who are practicing musicians and representatives of the *gharana*, as well as connoisseurs, students of Music from Universities and Institutions, who were benefitted by the masters of the Agra *gharana*. Musicians of this *gharana* were never merely performers but treated the art in its totality. They did not limit music to only entertainment but made it an instrument of education for the masses by various means, to reach the common man. Their service to Music is therefore without a parallel.

Every innovative artiste makes efforts to continuously seek novelty. A performing art is like a stream which has change and re-invention for salient characteristics. Such innovative artistes are always in search of reasons and opportunities for their innovation. The artistes of the Agra *gharana* retained the base of classical music and brought about

changes as and when required, such as going from Dhrupad in their singing to the *Khayal* of the Dhrupad Ang. They proved their innovative spirit through modern-day instruments such as *Sangeet Natak*, cinema and other media.

Bharat Muni wrote the '*Natyashastra*' on the subject of theatre. He presented therein thought on every single aspect of theatre. He thought of theatre as a multidisciplinary area wherein arts such as music and dance are also put to use. Therefore, he talked at length about these as well, in his treatise. Therein, he has treated all of these other arts as aspects of Theatre, underlined the worship of the *rasa* or emotions as a final goal of the arts, and emphasized the need for new and ongoing experimentation. The artistes of the Agra *gharana* put in similar efforts at innovation in the various forms of classical and semi-classical as well as light music.

Musicians of the Agra *gharana* showed their innovation through several popular branches of Music. The most important of these was Marathi *Natya Sangeet* and other forms included film music, *Nazrul Geeti* and *Ragapradhan* of Bengal. For any popular music style, the lyrics are important. Agra *gharana* was based on the *Nauhar Bani* of *Dhrupad*. Use of sweet words has been a specialty of the *Nauhar Bani*. Agra artistes made use of the words as per the sentiment of the raga. For that, they composed in all styles of music. With *laya* and *taal ang*, beautiful improvisation of many notes and words was second nature to these artistes, for which reason the artistes of this *gharana* were attracted to and could easily experiment with the branches of popular music. And for this reason, the artistes were able to successfully handle innovation in theatre and film music, *Nazrul Geeti* and *Ragapradhan* of Bengal as well as coke studio, fusion music, and choir singing. The compositions of the Swaminarayan and Pushtimargiya sects also made use of the ragas and *bandishes* of the Agra *gharana*. In addition, several artistes of light music were attracted enough to learn from artistes of the Agra *gharana* and won fame as singers and composers of theatre and film music and other kinds of music.

In addition to the musical genres mentioned above, another important area is musicology. Here too, artistes of the Agra *gharana* provided important contributions. If a performing artiste writes about the discipline of music, it is more authentic. This was amply illustrated by venerable seers from Bharat Muni to Bhatkhande. The Agra *gharana*

always had a treasure trove of traditional knowledge of music that was full of its own history, raga-raginis and *bandishes*. Therefore, these scholars had readily available material to work on. Several artistes of the *gharana* did unparalleled work in the area of musicology in the 20th century. Vilayat Hussain Khan, a *Khayal* singer, wrote a documentary treatise titled 'Sangeetagon ke Sansmaran', making a valuable historical contribution in the process. A scholar of the caliber of S.N. Ratanjankar wrote on several aspects of Music. After a systematized education in Music was introduced at the university level through efforts made by him and Bhatkhande, he provided services first as the principal of the Marris College and later as the Vice Chancellor of the Khairagarh University. He provided guidance to several students in both theory and practical. He inspired his students to also contribute to the theory of Music. One of his students, Sumati Mutatkar, was the first Ph.D. holder in Music. Ratanjankar and several other artistes worked in musicology and served Music by providing their services through diverse educational institutions. In this manner, after a hiatus of 150-200 years, prevailing music practice was written about in theoretical terms under the aegis of the Agra *gharana*. These artistes – in addition to writing books – also helped promote Music through seminars, lecture-demonstrations, and so on. In this manner, the artistes of the Agra *gharana* successfully took Indian music in its totality to the people through various popular Music genres, musicology, institutionalized academic training and writing books. An innovative and erudite tradition in Music was created under the aegis of the Agra *gharana*. This contribution should be written in golden letters in History.