

Musical Lineages of Indian Gharanas and Their Role in Indian Classical Music: Tradition, Style, and Legacy

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Abstract:

Indian classical music is one of the oldest living music traditions in the world. Its beauty and depth have been preserved for centuries through the *gharana* system. A *gharana* is a musical family or school where knowledge, style, and discipline are passed from teacher to student across generations. Each *gharana* has its own way of presenting ragas, rhythm, voice culture, and expression. This paper studies some major *gharanas* of Hindustani classical music - Gwalior, Delhi, Patiala, Agra, Jaipur, Senia, Kirana, and Banaras - and explains their importance in shaping Indian music.

Each of these *gharanas* represents a distinct musical personality shaped by history, geography, and teaching traditions. The Gwalior *Gharana* is respected for its balanced and straightforward *khayal* presentation. The Delhi *Gharana* is known for refined phrasing and rhythmic accuracy. The Patiala *Gharana* stands out for its energetic, flowing *taans* and expressive style. The Agra *Gharana* combines strength with depth and carries strong *dhrupad* influences. The Jaipur *Gharana* is admired for its focus on rhythm, complex compositions, and uncommon ragas. The Senia *Gharana*, rooted in the legacy of Tansen, has shaped both vocal and instrumental music traditions. The Kirana *Gharana* emphasizes purity of notes and slow, detailed raga development. The Banaras *Gharana* is known for its blend of classical, devotional, and semi-classical forms, reflecting the spiritual culture of the region.

This paper compares these *gharanas* based on their style, training methods, and performance approach. It also discusses how they have survived modern changes while keeping their traditional values. Even today, *gharanas* continue to guide musicians and help protect India's musical heritage. The study shows that the *gharana* system is not old-fashioned but a living tradition that connects the past with the present.

Keywords: *Gharana* system, Indian classical music, Hindustani music, musical lineage, *khayal* tradition, raga, *tala*, oral tradition, guru - *shishya* parampara, cultural heritage, music pedagogy, performance styles, musical identity, tradition and innovation, Indian music history

Introduction:

The *gharana* system is the backbone of Hindustani classical music. It is a tradition through which musical knowledge, performance techniques, and artistic values are passed from one generation to the next. More than just a teaching method, a *gharana* represents a distinct musical identity shaped by history, culture, and individual creativity. Over time, different regions of India developed their own musical styles under royal and cultural patronage. As musicians moved from one place to another, they carried their traditions

with them, giving rise to new gharanas and musical branches. Each gharana developed its own approach to raga, rhythm, voice training, and expression, making Indian classical music both diverse and unified. India's rich classical music tradition is shaped by various gharanas, each with its own unique style and identity. These gharanas have produced some of the greatest musicians and have preserved the art form through generations. Let's explore a few of the most famous gharanas that continue to inspire music lovers around the world.

1. GWALIOR GHARANA :

Origin and Development of the Gwalior Gharana :

The Gwalior Gharana, one of the oldest and most influential in Indian classical music, owes its development to the strong patronage of the Scindia rulers after the Tomar dynasty. The Scindias, originally from Maharashtra, settled in Gwalior in the early 18th century and made it their capital. Their support gave music a significant boost, elevating both the dhrupad and khayal styles to extraordinary heights. The khayal gayaki of Gwalior saw remarkable growth under the patronage of Shrimant Daulat Rao Scindia (1794 - 1827) and Shrimant Jayaji Rao Scindia (1843 - 1886). Musicians in Gwalior were skilled in both dhrupad and khayal, and their contributions were pivotal in transitioning from the dhrupad style to the more expressive and lyrical khayal. While khayal singing existed before, it was Ustad Natthan Pir Bux who played a crucial role in popularizing it, earning him the title of the "Father of Gwalior Khayal Gayaki." His efforts laid the foundation for this gharana's lasting legacy in Indian classical music.¹

Some Popular Gurus of Gwalior Gharana :

I.) Ustad Kadar Bux

Born in 1780, Ustad Kadar Bux was the son and disciple of the renowned Ustad Natthan Pir Bux. A gifted musician, he served in the court of Shrimant Daulat Rao Scindia, who was also his disciple. Ustad Kadar Bux's extraordinary talent earned him great fame, but it is believed that jealousy led to his untimely death through black magic in 1815, cutting short his life at a young age. His tragic death deeply saddened his father, Ustad Natthan Pir Bux, who then dedicated himself to mentoring his grandsons, Ustad Hassu Khan and Ustad Haddu Khan, ensuring the family's musical legacy continued.²

II.) Ustad Hassu Khan

Born in 1801, Ustad Hassu Khan was the talented son of Ustad Kadar Bux and the grandson of Ustad Natthan Pir Bux. After the tragic and early death of his father, Ustad Hassu Khan was raised and trained by Ustad Natthan Pir. Bux (paternal grandfather).

Ustad Hassu Khan's younger brother was Ustad Haddu Khan, and together they became renowned as Hassu-Haddu Khan. As versatile musicians, they skillfully incorporated Ustad Bade Mohammad Khan's taan into their singing style. This unique blend became the hallmark of the Gwalior khayal gayaki, earning it widespread recognition and admiration. Ustad Hassu Khan was blessed with a melodious and captivating voice. He had a vast collection of khayals infused with the essence of dhrupad. Among his remarkable techniques was the ability to sing taans with a closed mouth, showcasing his exceptional control and skill. His most famous specialty, however, was the "kadak bijli taan" (lightning-like taan), a powerful and electrifying rendition that demanded immense strength and could only be performed once during a

1 Pandit, Meeta, Indian's Heritage of Gharana Music Pandits of Gwalior, Pg. 28

2 Pandit, Meeta, Indian's Heritage of Gharana Music Pandits of Gwalior, Pg. 34

performance. Ustad Hassu Khan died around 1845. His son Ustad Gule Emam Khan later became a reputed musician.³

III.) Ustad Haddu Khan

Born in 1803, Mian Haddu Khan was the son of Ustad Kadar Bux and the grandson of Ustad Natthan Pir Bux. He was the younger brother of Ustad Hassu Khan and the cousin of Ustad Natthu Khan. After the untimely death of his father, Haddu Khan was trained by his grandfather, who ensured the continuation of his musical lineage. Mian Haddu Khan's khayal singing was so extraordinary that connoisseurs of music regarded him as an unparalleled khayal vocalist, setting a benchmark in the Gwalior gharana's legacy.⁴ Ustad Haddu Khan had two talented sons, Rahmat Khan and Chhote Muhammad Khan, both of whom were exceptional artists. Rahmat Khan, in particular, is often regarded as one of the greatest singers after Tansen. His melodious and soulful voice was considered a divine gift, earning him the title of "Bhugandharva" in some circles.⁵

The legacy of Ustad Haddu Khan's gayaki was carried forward and popularized not only by his sons but also by his son-in-law, Inayat Hussain of Sahaswan. Together, they ensured that the unique essence of his music reached far and wide. Inayat Hussain Khan, Ustad Haddu Khan's son-in-law, later became a prominent figure in the Rampur-Sahaswan Gharana. Beyond his family, Ustad Haddu Khan also trained several disciples, including Chhajju Khan, Nazir Khan, and Khadim Hussain. These three disciples eventually developed their own distinctive style of singing, which came to be known as the Bhindi Bazaar Gharana. This gharana became a unique branch of Indian classical music, reflecting the lasting impact of Ustad Haddu Khan's teachings and versatility.

IV.) Ustad Natthu Khan

Born in 1806, Ustad Natthu Khan was cousin of Ustad Haddu Khan and Ustad Hassu Khan. The three did riyaz together and received talim from Ustad Natthan Pir Bux. Ustad Natthu Khan was known for his unique style of presenting the sthai-antara in khayal singing. His love for taranas was also remarkable, with a vast repertoire that included slow, medium, and fast tempo compositions in various talas. His fast tempo taranas were especially captivating, where the real beauty could be felt as he sang the bols of trivat and then took a taan, perfectly landing on the sum. The audience was always enthralled by his performances, which were a blend of skill and emotion. In addition to his musical brilliance, Ustad Natthu Khan was known for his humble and amiable nature. He served as the court musician for Maharaja Jayaji Rao Scindia, who was not just his patron but also a ganda bandh shagird (close disciple). According to Pt. Krishnarao Shankar Pandit, the Maharaja, learned 500 compositions from Ustad Natthu Khan. As the Rajguru, Ustad Natthu Khan was well-compensated, receiving generous gifts, including an elephant. However, once he humbly remarked to the Maharaja: "I am your guru, but I am treated like my brothers. I don't feel special." In response, the Maharaja ordered that all the brass utensils in Natthu Khan's house be replaced with silver, and his expenses were covered by the royal treasury. Ustad Natthu Khan thanked the Maharaja for his kindness, praising him as a true connoisseur and patron of art.⁶

V.) Ustad Chhote Mohammad Khan

Born in 1840 to Ustad Haddu Khan after many years of marriage, Ustad Chhote Mohammad Khan was a cause for celebration. His birth was considered a divine blessing, and he was named "Mohammad" in

3 Pandit, Meeta, Indian's Heritage of Gharana Music Pandits of Gwalior, Pg. 35

4 Pandit, Meeta, Indian's Heritage of Gharana Music Pandits of Gwalior, Pg. 37

5 Khurana, Shanno, Malhotra, Sidharth Raj, Khyal Gayaki Mai Vividh Gharane, Pg. 7

6 Pandit, Meeta, Indian's Heritage of Gharana Music Pandits of Gwalior, Pg. 40

honor of this special event. As a child, he was admired for his beauty and quickly became the apple of everyone's eye. His musical journey began early, and he was known for his exceptional learning ability and remarkable talent. Ustad Chhote Mohammad Khan would practice for hours at the Tulsi Vrindavan Shejaril, located behind the residence of Pt. Bala Saheb Guruji, where his father, Ustad Haddu Khan, would listen and say, "He will keep my name alive."

His voice was deep, powerful, and full of force, with an impressive range that contrasted with Ustad Rehmat Khan's thin, sweet, and melodious voice. Ustad Chhote Mohammad Khan mastered various complex techniques, including ek dala tana, bol tana, raga wachak tana, kadak bijli tana, muki tana, and other difficult vocal acrobatics. These were taught to him in the basement of his father's home, where he honed his skills and established his place in the tradition of Gwalior khayal.⁷

VI.) Ustad Rehmat Khan

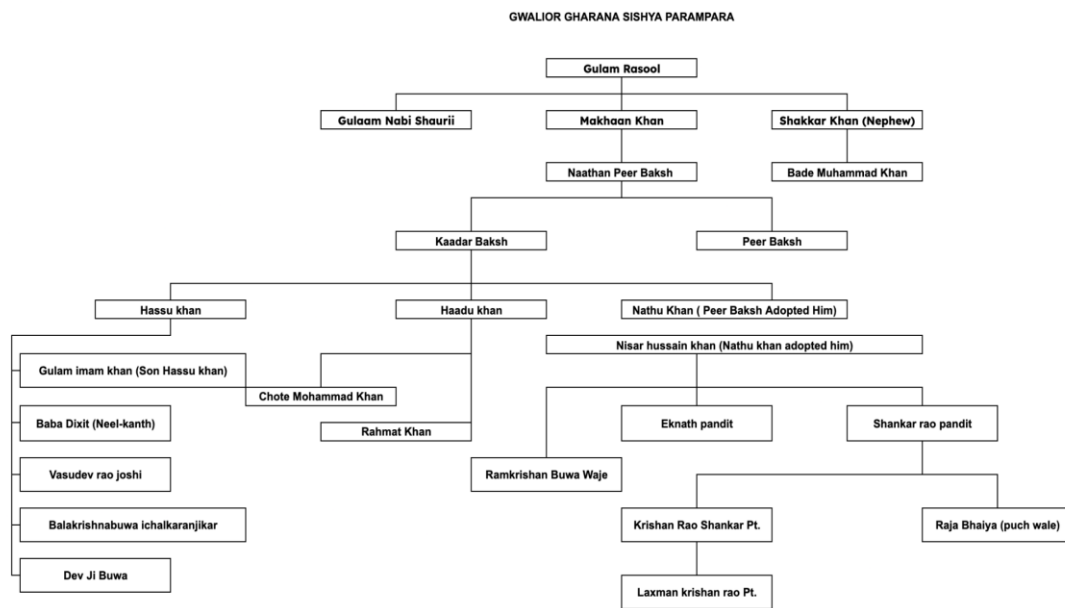
Ustad Rehmat Khan, the younger son of Ustad Haddu Khan, received music training from his father and other elders in his family from an early age. His style of singing was highly artistic and appealing, characterized by smooth transitions between notes with intricate meend-gamak. His taans were unmatched, and his specialty was reaching the sum after executing a breathtaking taan that spanned three and a half octaves.

Pt. Kashinath Pandit, the eldest son of Pt. Eknath Pandit, praised the variety of taans sung by Rehmat Khan, describing one of them as feeling like a chakri or discus throw. This variety of taans was immense and showcased his technical brilliance. Rehmat Khan was known for his suddha vani (pure voice) and suddha mudra (pure technique). Due to his exceptional singing, he earned the title of 'Bhu-Gandharva'.⁸ Despite his talent, Ustad Rehmat Khan faced personal hardships. He lost his parents and tragically, his elder brother, Ustad Chhote Mohammad Khan, died young. Rehmat Khan had a temperamental nature, and to hear him sing, Vishnupant Chhatre would sometimes sing a raga incorrectly, only to be corrected by Rehmat Khan after a stern reprimand.

"There are many more talented and famous artists in this gharana. Below is the family chart that showcases their lineage"

7 Pandit, Meeta, Indian's Heritage of Gharana Music Pandits of Gwalior, Pg. 41

8 Pandit, Meeta, Indian's Heritage of Gharana Music Pandits of Gwalior, Pg. 42, 43



2. DELHI GHARANA :

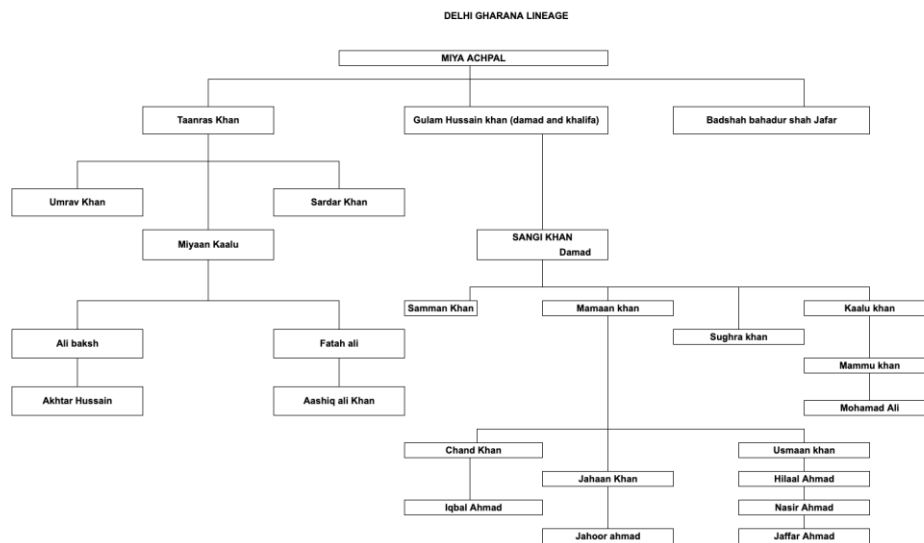
The Delhi Darbar's captivating singing style is known as the gharana's singing tradition. Since the establishment of Delhi, the city has been graced by numerous kings and their patronage. As a result, artists and scholars of all kinds gathered here. Music not only spent its childhood in Delhi but has also continued to thrive in the city throughout its development.

In the 12th century, during the reign of Sultan Jalaluddin Firuz Shah, famous musicians like Shah Jangi, Fantu Khan, and Nasir Khan graced the court. This tradition continued through various rulers who maintained renowned musicians at their courts. In 1696 CE, during the reign of Emperor Muhammad Shah, Nyamat Khan, known in the music world as Sadarang, was present at the court. However, the true foundation of the Delhi gharana was laid by Qutb Baksh, also known as Tanaraskha. Tanaraskha learned the art of singing from Miya Achpal, who served as a court musician under Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar (1437 CE). Achpal studied under Zainul Abidin Khan in Hyderabad. During this period, musicians like Shadi Khan Murad Khan, Nikorang, and Shitab Khan were also prominent in the music scene. Aliya Fatuh of Patiala was another disciple of Tanaraskha.

As the Mughal Empire declined, there was no protector of Delhi's music. Artists from Delhi migrated to other regions, and the unique style of singing began to take the name of the places they settled in. Some even argue that Delhi gharana can be seen as the root of all other gharanas. Sadarang, who spread the popularity of Khayal gayaki, was from Delhi. Tanaraskha was known for his extraordinary singing talent, with a voice that was both fast and beautiful. It is said that Katrutullah and Azmatullah of the Sikandara gharana once challenged him to a singing competition, but they were left humiliated in front of Tanaraskha's superior skill.

Tanaraskha's son Umaro Khan and his grandson Sardar Khan were also acclaimed musicians. Sardar Khan eventually settled in Pakistan. Umaro Khan had two highly respected disciples who contributed to the legacy of the Delhi gharana. This gharana gained fame not only for its singing but also for instrumental music. Renowned instrumentalists like Ustad Sangikh Khan (Chand Khan's father) and Ustad Buno Khan (a famous sarangi player) emerged from this lineage, adding to the widespread influence of the Delhi

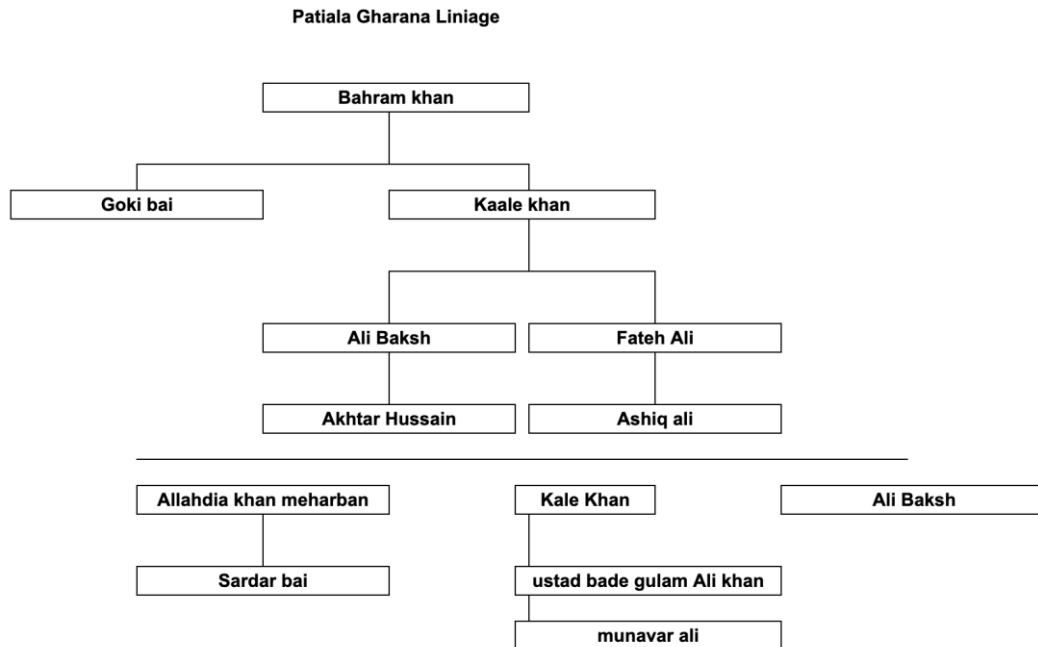
gharana in the world of music. Ustad Sangikh Khan had four sons: Saman Khan, Ustad Mamman Khan (father of Ustad Chand Khan), Abdul Gafur Khan (also known as Sughdah Khan), and Kallu Khan. It is said that Mamman Khan was originally from the Bawli gharana, but later, on the instruction of a fakir, he became a disciple of Chhajju Khan of the Bhindi Bazar gharana. He initially received his training from Abul Gani.⁹ Mamman Khan had many disciples, and his influence can still be seen in both India and Pakistan. Besides imparting vocal music training, he also had numerous disciples in sarangi playing, including prominent figures such as Ustad Bundoo Khan, Azeem Bakhsh, Nazar Muhammad, Nisar Hussain Khan of Agra, Ghulam Muhammad Kasuri, Gama Khan of Hoshiarpur, Ameer Hussain of Patiala, and many others.



3. PATIALA GHARANA :

Before the partition, Punjab had a rich musical tradition. The Sikh Gurus and Sufi saints greatly contributed to the development of music. The connection between Dhrupad and Khayal is also close in Punjab, and Tappa is a unique contribution from this region. Punjab Ang also has its own distinct flavor, particularly in the style of Thumri. The founders of the Patiala gharana were Ali Baksh and Fateh Ali, who are collectively known as Alia Fatuh. This pair learned music from Tanras Khan of the Delhi gharana, and also received training from Mubarak Ali of Lucknow, Behram Khan of Jaipur, and Haddo Khan of Gwalior. The Nawab of Tonk, Ibrahim Khan, bestowed upon them the title of "Jarnail Karnail" (General Colonel) for their musical prowess. They performed not only at the Tonk court but also at the Patiala court. Ali Baksh aka Alia Fatu did not have any children. Fateh Ali had three sons: Ali Baksh, Kale Khan, and Ashiq Ali. The legendary artist Ustad Bade Gulam Ali Khan was the son of Ali Baksh. In addition to his sons, Fateh Ali also taught Pyar Khan and Sindhi Khan. Pyar Khan spent most of his time in Punjab and Sindh, while Sindhi Khan and Kale Khan moved to Mumbai. Ustad Bade Gulam Ali Khan began learning music at the age of five from his uncle Kale Khan and continued under his tutelage for twelve years. After his uncle's passing, he further studied under his father and spent some time in Mumbai to learn from Sindhi

Khan. Besides being a renowned vocalist, Ustad Bade Gulam Ali Khan was also an exceptional sarangi player.¹⁰



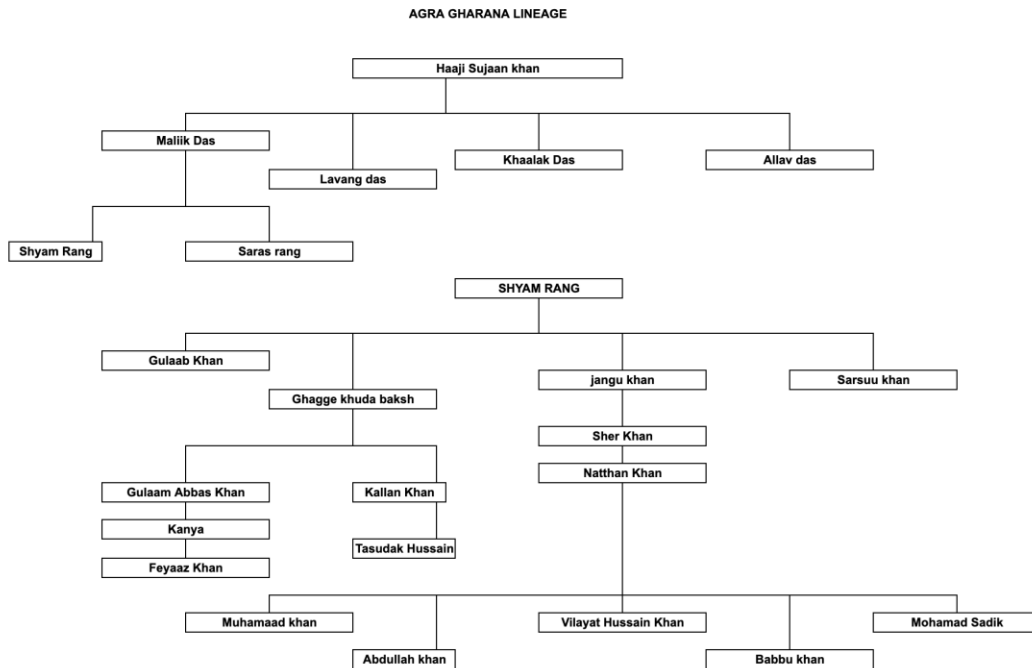
4. AGRA GHARANA :

The Agra Gharana traces its origins to Sujan Khan, a court singer at Emperor Akbar's court. Some believe this gharana was founded by Alakhdas Malukdas, while others, including Ustad Vilayat Hussain Khan, attribute its establishment to two brothers, Shyamrang and Sarsarang, around 1780. According to historical records, during the reign of Aurangzeb, Daim Khan became known as Sarsarang, and during the time of Mohammad Shah Rangila, Kayam Khan was known as Shyamrang. Shyamrang's younger son, Ghamghe Khudabakhsh, is credited with the development and popularization of the Agra Gharana's singing style. Born in Agra in 1800, Khudabakhsh initially struggled with his voice, which did not receive much attention from his elders. To receive proper training, he traveled to Gwalior and studied under Ustad Natthan Pir Bux, who taught him techniques to improve his voice. Over time, Khudabakhsh honed his vocal abilities and began performing publicly.

He is particularly recognized for introducing the Khayal style of singing to the Agra Gharana, which had previously been focused on Dhrupad, Dhamar, and Hori genres. Khudabakhsh had two sons: Abbas Khan (1825 - 1935) and Ghulam Haider Khan (1835 - 1935). His grandson, Ustad Faiyaz Khan, became one of the most prominent singers of the Agra Gharana.¹¹ Additionally, Khudabakhsh's brother, Jangu Khan, established a musical legacy through his lineage, which included Ustad Vilayat Hussain Khan, a highly respected name in the world of classical music.

¹⁰ Kumar, Avinash, Rampur Sahaswan gharana: Hindustani Sangeet Ki Ek Utkrisht Parampara, Pg. 33

¹¹ Kumar, Avinash, Rampur Sahaswan gharana: Hindustani Sangeet Ki Ek Utkrisht Parampara, Pg. 27

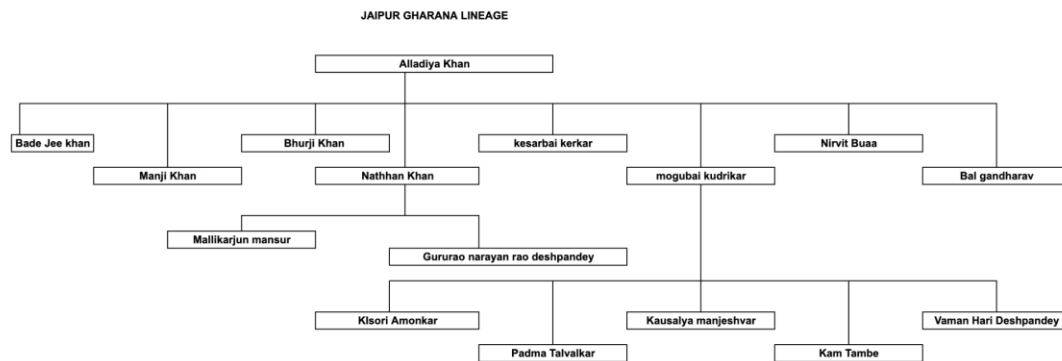


5. JAIPUR GHARANA :

The Jaipur Gharana is a special blend of various musical styles, making it stand out among other gharanas. What makes it unique is that it includes both singers and instrumentalists, which isn't the case with many other gharanas. By combining different musical traditions, the Jaipur Gharana created a beautiful fusion that became its trademark. For instance, Baharum Khan's Dhrupad style, Ghanghe Khudabakhsh's Khayal, Mubarak Ali Khan's Qawwali-inspired Khayals, Rajab Ali Khan's Veena mastery, and Imrat Sen's sitar playing all blended together in a harmonious way. This fusion of diverse styles formed the essence of the Jaipur Gharana, making it truly unique.

The addition of Muhammad Ali Khan's Khayal style further enriched the gharana, making it even more distinct. The Jaipur Gharana earned respect and recognition for its influential role in the development of modern music and became a prestigious gharana, leaving a lasting impact on the music world. Muhammad Ali Khan, one of the greatest figures of this gharana, was a legendary singer from Jaipur. He mentored the highly respected Pandit Bhaskar, and their contributions to Indian classical music are unmatched.

Another notable figure, Rajab Ali Khan, was an exceptional Veena player from Jaipur. Though originally from Saharanpur, he was known for his independent and free-spirited approach to music. His deep love for music led him to perform across many places, mesmerizing audiences with his remarkable Veena playing. His unique style combined artistry and complexity, making it unforgettable. His followers, inspired by his music, became dedicated students, continuing his legacy for generations.¹²



6. SENIA GHARANA :

The Senia Gharana is deeply rooted in the musical legacy of the legendary Mian Tansen, one of India's greatest musicians. Known for his mastery of Dhrupad singing and instrumental music, Tansen's style became the foundation for this gharana. Over time, his descendants and disciples have nurtured, expanded, and refined this tradition, making it a cornerstone of Indian classical music. The gharana derives its name from Tansen's lineage, with the term "Senia" representing those who upheld his teachings. These musicians not only preserved Tansen's original techniques but also introduced new styles of singing and crafted innovative musical instruments, ensuring the gharana's evolution across generations.¹³

Formation and Lineage :

The Senia Gharana was shaped by Tansen's family, particularly his sons, daughters, and their disciples. Some genealogical charts trace the lineage through Bilas Khan, Tansen's son, and the debated figure of Misri Singh, who is linked to the gharana's history. These charts attempt to connect Tansen's musical tradition to the present generation of musicians.

Challenges and Historical Gaps :

The Gharana's history, however, is not without its challenges. After 1667-1668, when Emperor Aurangzeb banned music in his court, many records of musical heritage were lost. This disrupted the Gharana's continuity and led to a decline in royal patronage. During this period, works like Faqirullah's "Raga Darpana" and Hakim Karam Imam's 1855 music text became key sources of information. These texts mentioned Saraswati Devi, said to be Tansen's daughter, and her descendants. However, scholars like Brahaspati Ji question the authenticity of these claims. Some believe that figures like Saraswati Devi and Misri Singh might have been fabricated by musicians attempting to establish their credibility and gain favor in royal courts. Unfortunately, there is no solid historical evidence to verify these assertions.

Legacy and Impact :

Despite these controversies and gaps in its history, the Senia Gharana stands as a testament to Tansen's enduring legacy. Its contributions to Indian classical music, both in vocal and instrumental traditions, remain unmatched. This gharana continues to inspire musicians, preserving the essence of Tansen's genius while adapting to the changing times.

7. Kirana Gharana :

The Kirana Gharana is one of the most renowned schools of Indian classical music, known for its unique style and exceptional lineage. Its roots can be traced back to Ghulam Taki Khan, a celebrated beenkar

¹³ Dhar, Sunita, Senia Gharana: Its Contribution to Indian Classical Music, Pg. 66

(veena player) and Dhrupad singer from the early 18th century. His grandson, Bande Ali Khan, later gained fame as a master of the veena, and he is often considered the founder of the Kirana Gharana.¹⁴

Origin of the Name :

The gharana derives its name from the village of Kirana in Uttar Pradesh, which became the family's home after a devastating flood forced them to leave their original village of Dautahi in Meerut district.

Evolution of the Tradition

According to Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande, certain communities in North India specialized in music and were later identified as Mirasis. Members of this community pursued different aspects of music, such as singing, sarangi playing, veena playing, or tabla accompaniment. Some historians consider Bande Ali Khan to be a part of this tradition.

Bande Ali Khan had five prominent disciples:

1. Murad Khan - A veena player from Indore.
2. Anna Saheb Ghorpude - Another renowned veena player.
3. Baba Nanne Khan - A Dhrupad and Khayal singer.
4. Moula Baksh - A sarangi player from Sonipat.
5. Azim Baksh - A sitarist from Paloor.

Contribution to Khayal Singing

While some historians credit Rahman Baksh and Kale Khan as the pioneers of Khayal singing in the gharana, others argue that it began with Baba Nanne Khan. Nanne Khan's son, Rahim Baksh, was a highly skilled artist who later settled in Hyderabad. He trained his nephew, Haider Baksh, in sarangi and vocal music. Haider Baksh eventually moved to Kolhapur and became associated with Ustad Alladiya Khan, providing sarangi accompaniment during performances.

Prominent Figures and Legacy

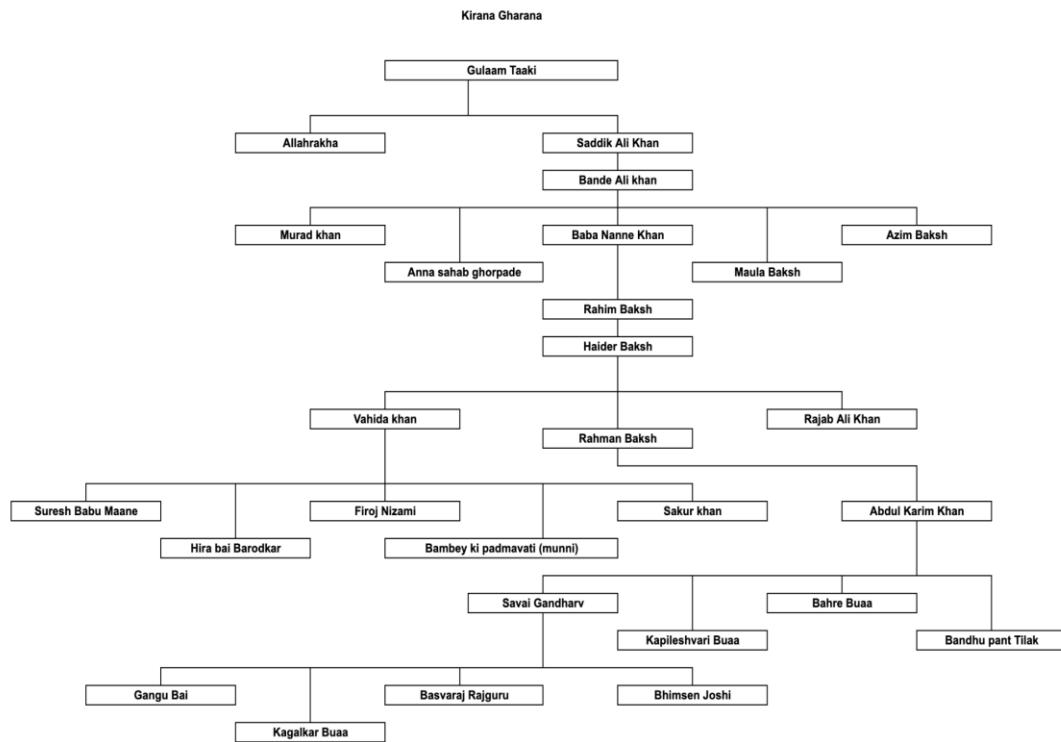
The gharana flourished with contributions from many disciples of Haider Baksh, including:

- Waheed Khan
- Rahman Baksh
- Rajab Ali Khan from Dewas, who adopted Haider Baksh's techniques while drawing inspiration from Alladiya Khan's style.

In the late 19th century, Rahman Baksh and Kale Khan infused the gharana with new elements, which brought greater popularity to their style. This period marked the Kirana Gharana's transformation into one of the most beloved traditions in Indian classical music, celebrated for its melodious, emotional, and soulful renditions.¹⁵

14 Khurana, Shanno, Malhotra, Sidharth Raj, Khyal Gayaki Mai Vividh Gharane, Pg. 53

15 Khurana, Shanno, Malhotra, Sidharth Raj, Khyal Gayaki Mai Vividh Gharane, Pg. 53



8. BANARAS GHARANA :

The Banaras Gharana holds a significant yet often debated place in the world of Indian classical music. While many recognize Banaras for its rich tradition of thumri, chaiti, kajri, and tappa, some musicians argue that Banaras does not have a distinct gharana for khayal singing. However, this perception is challenged by the stellar contributions of artists like Pandit Rajan-Sajan Mishra, who have established Banaras as a vital center of khayal music.¹⁶

Reasons Behind the Debate

There are two main reasons why Banaras is sometimes not acknowledged as a separate gharana in khayal singing:

1. Dominance of Folk and Semi-Classical Styles: Banaras is famously associated with semi-classical forms such as thumri, kajri, and chaiti, which overshadow its khayal tradition.
2. Popularity of Instrumentalists: The city has produced legendary tabla and sarangi players, whose prominence may have diverted attention from khayal singing.

Despite this, Pandit Rajan-Sajan Mishra passionately argued for the gharana's legitimacy. According to them, dismissing Banaras as a khayal gharana stems either from a lack of knowledge or intentional misinformation. They emphasize that Banaras has a deep-rooted musical tradition and has produced numerous great khayal vocalists over the centuries.

The Musical Legacy of Banaras

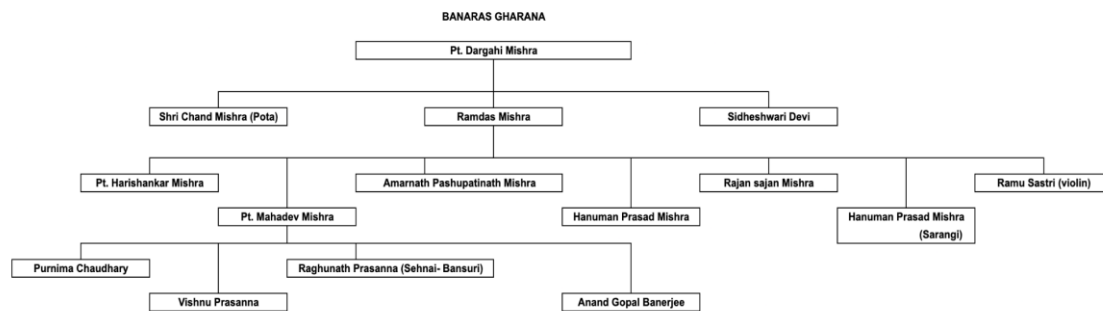
Banaras has always been a center for art, literature, and music. The musicians of this gharana are known for their versatility, excelling in a wide range of styles:

- Khayal

¹⁶ Kumar, Avinash, Rampur Sahaswan Gharana: Hindustani Sangeet Ki Ek Utkrisht Parampara, Pg. 38, 39

- Thumri
- Tappa
- Kajri
- Chaiti
- Bhajan
- Ghazal
- Dhrupad and Dhamar

While Banaras is often celebrated for its thumri ang (a thumri-influenced style of singing), this does not diminish its rich khayal tradition. Many outstanding khayal singers have emerged from this gharana, contributing to its enduring legacy.



Conclusion

The gharana system has played a central role in shaping and preserving the tradition of Hindustani classical music. Through the guru - shishya parampara, each gharana has maintained its unique musical identity while passing knowledge and discipline from one generation to the next. The eight gharanas discussed in this paper—Gwalior, Delhi, Patiala, Agra, Jaipur, Senia, Kirana, and Banaras—represent the richness and diversity of Indian classical music.

Each gharana has contributed distinct elements such as melodic purity, rhythmic complexity, emotional depth, or technical brilliance. Together, they have created a strong foundation for the growth of Indian classical music. Despite historical challenges such as the decline of royal patronage, migration of musicians, and modernization, the gharana system has survived and adapted without losing its core values. In the present time, when music is rapidly changing due to technology and globalization, gharanas continue to serve as guiding traditions for both performers and learners. They remind us that classical music is not only about performance but also about discipline, respect for tradition, and continuous learning.

This study shows that the gharana system is not a rigid or outdated structure but a living cultural heritage that connects the past with the present. By preserving its roots while welcoming innovation, the gharanas ensure that Indian classical music remains vibrant, meaningful, and relevant for future generations.

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