

Bhimsen Joshi and the Kirana Gharānā*

CHETAN KARNANI

I. INTRODUCTION

The Kirana gharānā laid emphasis on melody rather than rhythm. In our times, Bhimsen Joshi has become the most popular artist of this gharānā because he combines melody with virtuosity. His teacher Sawai Gandharva combined melody with the euphony of his voice. Sawai Gandharva's teacher, Abdul Karim Khan, was a pioneer and the founder of the Kirana gharānā. He had a rare gift for making melodic phrases in any rāga he chose to sing. Abdul Karim Khan had another notable disciple in Roshan Ara Begam, but Sawai Gandharva was by far his most distinguished disciple. Sawai Gandharva's important disciples are Bhimsen Joshi, Gangubai Hangal and Firoz Dastur. In later sections of this chapter I have emphasized the rugged masculinity of Gangubai Hangal's voice. I have also discussed the systematic elaboration of rāgas presented by Firoz Dastur.

Just as the Gwalior gharānā has two lines represented by Haddu Khan and Hassu Khan, the Kirana gharānā has two lines represented by Abdul Karim Khan and Abdul Wahid Khan. Abdul Wahid Khan combined melody with systematic elaboration of rāga. He laid emphasis on the placid flow of music and preferred to sing in Jhoomra tāla of fourteen beats. By elaborating a rāga in slow tempo, he showed a facet of melody distinct from Abdul Karim Khan. His most distinguished disciples were Hirabai Barodekar and Pran Nath, who sang with euphony in slow tempo.

It is sheer good luck that the pioneers of the Kirana gharānā, Abdul Karim Khan and Abdul Wahid Khan, were saved from oblivion by the gramophone companies. Even in Western music, the belief that Listz was a great pianist or Paganini a great violinist are not verifiable propositions. But the genius of Abdul Karim Khan, who died in 1937, can be seen from about forty five-minute recordings that he has left us.

On the other hand, Abdul Wahid Khan has been preserved by the archives of All India Radio. He recorded three rāgas when he was past his seventieth year. In the best Kirana tradition, Wahid Khan gives greater importance to melody than to rhythm, which is always subdued by the sheer grandeur of brilliant musical

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phrases. Wahid Khan sang his slow compositions in Jhoomra tāla, as mentioned before. After arriving at the climactic point, there is a gap of six subdivisions, and this creates an exhilarating effect.

As a pioneer of the Kirana school, Wahid Khan shares with Abdul Karim Khan his intuitive perception of melody. Both the masters have soft, sweet and high-pitched voices. Both can meditate over notes brilliantly. In two subsequent generations, these norms have been preserved by Sawai Gandharva, Bhimsen Joshi, and Hirabai Barodekar.

As a result of the influence of Wahid Khan, some Kirana musicians overdo their *badhat*—elaboration of a rāga. One can have as many as five thousand and forty permutations and combinations of the seven notes of an octave. But not all of them are worth performing. If one performs all these combinations, the form of a rāga becomes the casualty. Some permutations are good for practice, while others are good for performance. One needs the sense of a composer to sift the performable patterns from those which are good only for practice. Some Kirana musicians have occasionally failed to draw the line here.

If Abdul Karim Khan was the melodic genius of the Kirana gharānā, Abdul Wahid Khan was its mathematical genius. While the former was the quintessence of melody, the musical patterns of the latter, occasionally, had no lyrical value. Yet it was to the credit of Wahid Khan that he covered the whole of the *merukhand*.

The singular achievement of Wahid Khan lay in the fact that he set down a definite basis for the development of a rāga. He believed that the moment you touched the next higher note, an entirely new gestalt was formed in relation to the earlier notes. In this respect, even Amir Khan was influenced by the vocalism of Wahid Khan. This aspect of Wahid Khan's achievement has influenced musicians of the Kirana gharānā as much as it has influenced vocalists of the Indore gharānā.

On the other hand, Abdul Karim Khan was an ocean of melody. He was the true voice of feeling. For this reason, even those who belong to other gharānās find his appeal irresistible.

All the vocalists discussed in this chapter have emphasized tunefulness as a musical quality. They suggest that a lapse in rhythm is tolerable but one in melody intolerable. For this reason, they have given their entire attention to the grace of melody. Also, after the practice of Abdul Karim Khan, most Kirana singers have developed the rāga in the upper octave rather than the lower octave. This is different from the practice of vocalists of the Indore gharānā who loved to elaborate the rāga in a lower octave.

The placid flow of Abdul Wahid Khan's *ālāp* is best seen in Hirabai



Clockwise : Abdul Karim Khan, Abdul Wahid Khan, Bhimsen Joshi.



Barodekar. She sang her slow Khayāl with the same calculated pauses and heavy drawl. As mentioned earlier, the other important disciple of Wahid Khan was Pran Nath. According to Pran Nath's disciple, Shiela Dhar, "Abdul Wahid Khan was Pran Nath's model and ideal but he was more fascinated by the luminous areas around notes and indulged his imagination limitlessly in exploring these areas, with subtlety and nuance. . ."¹ He had such mastery over notes that he could actually demonstrate the difference of *komal rishab* in twenty different rāgas. His *meends* (slurs) had depth and variety. Next to Hirabai Barodekar, Pran Nath remains the most efficient disciple of Abdul Wahid Khan.

Abdul Karim Khan's music gave tranquillity and peace. He laid more emphasis on ālāp than *tān*, employing simple *tān* patterns. The only two musicians of the Kirana school in the line of Abdul Karim Khan who have employed complex *tān* patterns are Bhimsen Joshi and Roshan Ara Begum. The style of the latter vocalist is an exception rather than the rule in the Kirana gharānā. The Kirana style is not as florid as it appears to be in the case of Roshan Ara Begum.

The Kirana gharānā specialized in slow expressive singing. The Kirana vocalists are given to elongating a note so as to give an impression of peace, tranquillity and serenity. One is supposed to tune one's spirit with the spirit of a note. This is the reason why Kirana vocalists elaborate the *shadja* of the upper octave with full breadth, loudly, and with longer duration.

Kirana musicians sing a limited number of rāgas like Shuddha Kalyan, Puriya, Todi, Patdeep, Abhogi and Yaman. Their repertoire is not as large as the Jaipur and Agra gharānās. Bhimsen Joshi sings traditional compositions in traditional rāgas to enviable perfection. He has mastered them at the highest level of complexity. I have chosen to make Bhimsen Joshi the central figure of the Kirana gharānā in this chapter because he combines a rare sense of melody with brilliant virtuosity. This no other Kirana musician had before him.

II. BHIMSEN JOSHI

Bhimsen Joshi is one of the few artists to have preserved the purity of the Kirana tradition in Hindustani music. He has made no concessions to the tastes of foreign audiences. A few years back, I heard a recording of his Puriya Kalyan in Ottawa, Canada. He sang the rāga in the same orthodox style, with the same elaboration, as he had sung in the National Programme of All India Radio.

As a genuine representative of the Kirana gharānā, Bhimsen Joshi embodies the true voice of feeling. He never heard Abdul Karim Khan, yet in his emotional

¹Letter to me dated 1 September, 1997.

rendering of Shuddha Kalyan, he obviously derives inspiration from the pioneer of the Kirana school. Joshi has brilliantly combined a romantic intensity of feeling with the classical concern for form. His recorded rendering of Maru Bihag, in which both the Khayāls depict the state of a forlorn lover with unusual poignancy, is a good instance of the combination of these romantic and classical values. Maru Bihag is a combination of Yaman and Bihag, yet it is surprising that Joshi has recorded Yaman brilliantly but has not recorded Bihag.

In fact, Joshi is so much an embodiment of traditional values that his long-playing record (EASD 1501) presenting Lalit Bhatiyar and Kalashree must be seen as an exception. Though Joshi here sings Lalit and Bhatiyar alternately, he has to be given credit for combining the two emotional modes. This is the most poignant rendering of the two diverse modes which Joshi has combined brilliantly. On the other hand, Kalashree is a curious combination of Kalavati and Rageshwari. Here, the impression one gets is that of a mechanical mixture rather than a chemical compound. This new combined rāga does not come to Joshi as naturally as Saheli Todi did to Kumar Gandharva. This is so because Joshi's natural talent has been for traditional rāgas.

Bhimsen Joshi is gifted with a soft, subdued, sweet and melodious voice which reminds one of Abdul Karim Khan and Sawai Gandharva. He learnt his music in his early days in Lucknow, Gwalior and Rampur. Subsequently he was a disciple of Sawai Gandharva for many years. In his music room in his house in Pune, there is a portrait of Sawai Gandharva, and Joshi remarks with gratitude how Sawai Gandharva finally settled his style. Joshi learnt only three rāgas from Sawai Gandharva—Todi, Multani and Puriya—but the teacher gave the finishing touches to his style. Yet there is a difference between the master and the disciple. The difference is that Sawai Gandharva took a lot of time to warm up while Joshi can grip his audience even as he sings his initial shadja. The common factor between the two is the introspective and meditative touch to their vocalism.

Like most Kirana vocalists, Joshi has won the hearts of his listeners by his rendering of Shuddha Kalyan. Like Abdul Karim Khan and Roshan Ara Begum, he has provided a brilliant interpretation of this raga. His recorded rendering of Shuddha Kalyan (ECLP 2264) provides a fine example of the soft, soothing quality of his voice. He does not raise his volume until he reaches *tār shadja*. This prayer to the goddess of wealth and the goddess of learning is rendered in a deeply meditative tone, as when at the beginning of the composition Joshi allows his voice to tarry at *pancham* with remarkable effect. Throughout, interesting *murkis* and brilliant meends lend enchantment to the rendering. In the *antarā*, Joshi raises his volume competently to sing a full-throated *gāndhāra* of the upper octave.

Joshi is a fine composer. In this *rāga*, he has sung passages with symmetry and balance, and this gives the impression of fine composition rather than hasty improvisation. Shuddha Kalyan is a compound of Bhopali and Yaman—yet it is surprising that Joshi has recorded Yaman but not sung Bhopali. In the best Kirana tradition, Joshi does not sing his Shuddha Kalyan as Bhoop Kalyan. In ascent, he usually shows *madhyam* and *nishād* more through meend than by actually producing the note.

Joshi believes in systematic note-by-note elaboration of a *rāga* which is so characteristic of the Kirana school. But he does not treat badhat as a formula. In concerts, he can elaborate Abhogi up to madhyam of the middle octave and then suddenly jump to gāndhāra of the upper octave and elaborate the *rāga* as a whole. In fact, Joshi has modernized his *gharānā* by adapting it to the requirements of the new age. Unlike Wahid Khan, Joshi does not take forty-five minutes to illustrate the grandeur of gāndhāra of the middle octave of Darbari. Joshi knows the difference between melodic phrases which are good for practice and for performance. By sheer intuitive perception, he has imparted new euphony to his rendering of Abhogi.

As a concession to popular taste, Joshi usually sings his *vilambit* Khayal in Ektal—which is almost twice as fast as the *vilambit* Jhoomra of Wahid Khan or Amir Khan. Joshi does not believe in the elaboration of a *rāga* in very slow tempo. He gives it animation by singing in a faster Ektal. The difference becomes conspicuous when one compares the renderings of Miyan-ki-Malhar by Amir Khan and Bhimsen Joshi. Amir Khan elaborates the *rāga* systematically note by note mostly in the lower octave. On the other hand, Joshi presents a rather hurried glimpse of the *rāga*, and, for his effect, relies more on *tāns* than on *ālāp*.

Bhimsen Joshi is not a very orthodox adherent of the Kirana *gharānā*. He believes that *gharānā* is a matter of convenience only. What one learns from one's guru has to be supplemented by individual genius, otherwise one will not have anything worthwhile to say. In fact, a good disciple should not be a second-rate imitation of his master, but should be a first-rate improvement on his teacher. This is why Joshi got guidance not only from Sawai Gandharva but learned from many other sources. He has been quite eclectic in his borrowings. For instance, he has borrowed the composition 'Sakhi Shyam Nahin Aye' from Bholanath Bhat of Allahabad in his rendering of Chhaya Malhar (CALP 1328). In his clear enunciation and emphasis on the text, he is closer to the Gwalior school. Many of his *tān* patterns are borrowed from Mallikarjun Mansoor and Kesarbai Kerkar of the Jaipur school. Joshi has derived many of the patterns in *bol-ālāp* and *bol-tāns* from that great vocalist of the Agra school—Ustad Vilayat Hussain Khan. When

I met Joshi in his house in Pune, he told me that he had processed all these borrowed goods in his Kirana factory. In other words, he has added to this borrowed stuff an emotional aura and a meditative touch so characteristic of the Kirana school. After all, the main difference between Vilayat Hussain Khan and Bhimsen Joshi is that the former sang in a bold, full-throated voice, whereas the latter sings in a subdued and soft way.

The Kirana school owes much to Bhimsen Joshi. Before his arrival, there were some deficiencies in it. Joshi has supplied the missing elements and given his school a satisfying completeness. His *tāns* are the result of hard work spread over a number of years, which has given them the element of *taiyāri*. We can appreciate the truth of this statement by comparing the *tāns* of Bhimsen Joshi with earlier masters of the Kirana gharānā. The *tāns* of Abdul Karim Khan sound rather stilted. On the other hand, Wahid Khan found it difficult to achieve a proper balance between his *ālāp* and *tāns*. He only used to sing a few *tāns* towards the close of a recital. Even Sawai Gandharva is distinguished more for his *ālāp* and *bhāva* than for his *tāns* and *taiyāri*. But Bhimsen Joshi is extremely fond of *tāns* and has indeed introduced a unique, new, commendable innovation. Towards the end of his *Badā Khayāl*, he starts a volley of brilliant *tāns*, arriving at the *sama* (the climactic point) with dextrous precision. This is an innovation that deserves praise because it is an advance on many other artists who mainly sing their *tāns* only in fast *Teental*. Joshi is able to sing enchanting *tāns* in his *Vilambit Khayāl* because he has borrowed some of his *tān* patterns from the Jaipur school and because he has unusual breath-control. Like Mallikarjun Mansoor, he can prolong a *tān* to his full breath, creating an atmosphere of suspended animation.

Joshi's *tāns* have rare aesthetic appeal. They have a sustained tension which is missing in the *tāns* of other vocalists. He has specialized in *Uljhati tāns* which are usually woven round three or four notes. After this, there is a tetrachordal or parallel-octave jump which is exhilarating for listeners. Joshi believes that mere virtuosity is not a virtue in itself. There are artists of the Agra and Patiala schools who can turn out *tāns* cheaper by the dozen. But these fast figures lack grace because they have neither form nor pattern. On the other hand, Joshi's *tāns* have both variety and continuity. In his *tāns* one can see each note separately, merging into a stream of melody. There is brilliant discreteness of constituent notes in every fast figure of Bhimsen Joshi, who does not leave anything to chance: his *tāns* are measured and precise. After an intricate, involved or sustained *tān*, he utters the *bandish* of his *Khayāl* and arrives at the *sam* with unusual artistry. Unlike many other artists, Joshi knows that a good *tān* is appealing only against the background of the text of a composition. And the reason for Joshi's success

is his remarkable breath control—a sort of yogic discipline—which gives his fast figures their sustained animation.

This mastery of *tāns* has given Bhimsen Joshi enormous mass appeal. As a firm believer in the tradition, he has mastered certain traditional *rāgas*. As a popular concert vocalist, he usually chooses allied modes which he has mastered to enviable perfection. He renders with astonishing ease such related *rāgas* as Yaman, Yaman Kalyan, Shuddha Kalyan, Puriya, Puriya Kalyan and Puriya Dhanashri, over which he has complete control. For Joshi's purposes, this has been an admirable strategy, for he has attained the highest possible complexity in certain *rāgas* and these have served him well as the bedrock of his concert repertoire.

Like most Kirana vocalists, Joshi starts his recital with Yaman, which every student of music learns in the beginning. His popular slow *Khayal* '*Kahe Sakhi Kaise ki*' shows excellent mastery of tonal variations and rhythmic manipulation. His recorded composition in *Jhaptal* is a gem of succinct presentation. Like other Kirana vocalists, Joshi does not rely on *layakāri* as an important element in his vocalism. This is the reason why he has recorded his *Jaijaiwanti* and *Brindabani Sarang* in *Jhaptal*. In order to create an impact on the average listener, he presents some rhythmic variations in a *drut* composition in Yaman Kalyan—'*Eri Ali Piya Bin*'—a composition which has been popularized by Lata Mangeshkar. In this case he appeals by singing that which is already familiar, creating effect as much by his matchless glides as by scintillating fast figures that make intricate use of both *madhyams*.

Joshi's love of tradition can be seen from the fact that he has always preferred traditional compositions to new-fangled ones. He believes that a composition is just a peg to hang one's improvisational coat on. The traditional composition has the advantage of familiarity and association which can be made use of with subtle artistry. Thus *Multani* is always associated with the boy from Gokul, Krishna, making love to a *gopi* from Barsana. Joshi's recorded rendering makes good use of this traditional composition which one can find in any traditional textbook. Joshi's *Multani* has not only the nostalgia of summer afternoons but also the pathos associated with that brilliant *Adarang* composition which has always been synonymous with *Multani*. Incidentally, most of Bhimsen Joshi's recorded compositions are borrowed from traditional sources, particularly from *Adarang* and *Sadarang*. He has not wasted his time on composition; instead, he has concentrated on the intricacy and complexity of melody.

The immense popularity Bhimsen Joshi enjoys is to be attributed to the fact that he treads the beaten path with rare artistry. He has infused new life in our old tradition. Even though the compositions are traditional, his renderings of *Todi*,

Malkauns, Puriya Kalyan and Darbari have added a new dimension to Indian music. In these rāgas, he has revealed his rare intuitive perception of melody in the best tradition of Abdul Karim Khan. What impresses the listener is his romantic fondness for *shrutis* and quavers which add a characteristic touch to some of his melodic phrases.

Above all, Bhimsen Joshi has given a romantic content to Indian music. He does not like abstraction and always gives his music a certain desirable verbal-musical parallelism. No better instance of this aspect of his music can be given than the recorded rendering of Lalit. This provides a typical instance of his romantic overflow of powerful feeling. His rendering of the well-known composition '*Rain ka Sapna*' brings before the mind's eye the well-known painting of a lovelorn maiden. Joshi does not merely sing the notes. He tries to depict the theme musically. Few Indian musicians devote more attention to representation than Joshi. He has done this consciously in his Drut Khayal in Miyan-ki-Malhar where he tries to create the sound-sense harmony by simulating the falling of rain with the word '*dhoom*'.

In the true romantic tradition, Bhimsen Joshi does things which are beyond his natural powers. He makes frequent use of the romantic contrast of crescendo and diminuendo. He occasionally employs full-throated use of *pancham* of the upper octave, creating a very loud effect. He occasionally turns his head sideways and whispers a low trill or renders an intricate pattern of notes. He makes abundant use of gestures seeming to sing with his whole body. These are some of the reasons why he is among our most popular concert artists.

There is one more innovation in Bhimsen Joshi's singing which deserves commendation. In his recorded slow Khayāls, he always renders an antarā and thereby changes his sama after fifteen minutes or so. By shifting his point of rest to the upper octave, he elaborates the rāga methodically first in the middle and then the upper octave. There is considerable monotony in an Amir Khan recital because he never shifts his sama to another note. Joshi, on the other hand, has greater animation and variety in his recitals because of this new device. He manages to say so much! Besides, he creates stability in flux by stretching the sonant of a rāga. Occasionally, he makes Tār Sā his point of rest after rendering an intricate pattern of notes. He has prolonged this note in Malkauns with such artistry that he almost creates the effect of a trance.

In his later long-playing records, Joshi has asserted his faith in the tradition. In one L.P., we have two noontime rāgas—Brindabani Sarang and Gaud Sarang. In the former, Joshi has sung the vilambit composition '*Tum Raba Tum Karim*' in Jhaptal of ten beats. This is Khayāl in Sādrā style and Joshi improvises brilliant *bolbānt*, arriving at the sama gracefully. He makes adroit use of both *nishāds*.

This pentatonic mode has the langorous charm of summer afternoons. Unfortunately, Joshi's *drut* composition '*Jaun Main Tope Balhari*' is not as competent as Basavraj Rajguru's recorded complex composition '*Sagari Umariya Mori*' in the same *rāga*.

Among recent additions to Bhimsen Joshi's discography, the most important is Patdeep. An unusual thing about Joshi's Patdeep is that he has sung this vilambit Khayāl in slow Teental. Unlike other Kirana singers, Joshi sings the vilambit composition '*Piya Nahin Aye*' in *drut*. Compared to Abdul Karim Khan, Abdul Wahid Khan and Hirabai Barodekar, Joshi's Patdeep is trim and surprising. It does not have the feeling of the three other artists but it leaves one aghast by the brilliance of the *tāns*.

Bhimsen Joshi is the only Kirana artist who has sung Ramkali brilliantly. This *rāga* has poignant and introspective appeal. Ramkali is in fact a variation of Bhairav, the only difference being that it uses *tivra madhyam* in the ascent and *komal nishād* in the descent. Both the traditional compositions are brilliantly rendered by Joshi, and create an atmosphere of religious devotion and unction.

In spite of such achievement, Joshi remains an enigma. The paradox is that he is a consummate artist with a very limited repertoire. The *rāgas* he has mastered can be counted on one's fingers. His repetition of stock concert items often irritates his admirers. One often hears him sing Puriya or Shuddha Kalyan or Todi and this gives the impression that he has specialized in these modes only. He has not aspired to be a Vilayat Hussain Khan or Mallikarjun Mansoor who can sing a new *rāga* in the next concert. Bhimsen Joshi's repertoire is indeed rather limited. The worst thing about his stock items is that he has arrived at a stage where he merely mechanically reproduces the set patterns again and again. When I asked him why he repeats himself, he replied: "The thing should be in your throat and not in your head, and this is very difficult". In a way, this is true, because the intricacy of Joshi's *tāns* shows the immense homework he has done.

Bhimsen Joshi is too great an artist not to be able to overcome this limitation, but he has not bothered to do this extra bit. The result of this indolence is that he is degenerating. His records of Abhogi, Marwa, Asavari, Todi and Kalavanti are conspicuous failures. Abhogi is a favourite *rāga* of Kirana musicians. Abdul Karim Khan and Gangubai Hangal have also sung this *rāga*. And though Joshi sings Abhogi brilliantly in his concerts, he has not done well in his recorded rendering.

Further, Joshi has employed the same method in every *rāga* ignoring the basic fact that each *rāga* has its own genius. This is the reason why he is successful in Puriya but not in Marwa, in spite of the fact that both the *rāgas* employ exactly

the same hexatonic scale. Amir Khan's vilambit Marwa is a brilliant success while Joshi's vilambit Marwa is a conspicuous failure.

The fact that Bhimsen Joshi ignores this important postulate of aesthetics can be seen from his indiscriminate use of tāns in many rāgas. The tāns that impress in Shuddha Kalyan go flat when they are thoughtlessly transplanted in Abhogi. Joshi's tāns in Shuddha Kalyan do not have the same brilliance as the tāns of Roshan Ara Begum of his own gharānā.

In his later recordings, Bhimsen Joshi has added *sargam* but this has not come to him as naturally as it did to Amir Khan. For this reason, Joshi's *sargam* in Kalavanti sounds artificial. Similarly, Joshi has made the same use of bolbānt and ornaments in all rāgas. He seems to forget that a stylistic device which works in Todi may not succeed when repeated in Suha. But Joshi is in too great a hurry to bother about these nuances.

The result of such indifference is that Joshi has to capitalize on just a few special items in his repertoire. Every concert includes one of his two well-known Thumris in Jogia or Ghara. A serious Khayāl singer of Joshi's stature should not sing Thumri, even as Amir Khan never sang Thumri in concerts. Joshi imitates Abdul Karim Khan in his Thumris even though he is not able to achieve the mastery of the pioneer of the Kirana school. His Thumris in Mishra Kafi and Tilang do not impress because they do not have many stylistic variations. Actually, he has no genius for Thumri; he sings Thumri in Khayāl style, and there tends to be too much repetition. But as a concert artist, he insists on singing Thumris for the sake of popularity.

Bhimsen Joshi is a better singer of Bhajans than of Thumris. He has recorded two religious songs brilliantly—the first a Brahmanand Bhajan and the second a recent song, '*Tum Mori Rakho Laj Hari*'. Because he cares for mass appeal, he ends every concert with his Bhairavi Bhajan by Brahmanand. Joshi should not forget that even in good things, the law of diminishing returns starts operating sooner or later. When he sings these special items, he gives the impression of a tape-recorder coming alive. In fact, his record of the Brahmanand Bhajan is far superior to his performance of this Bhajan in concerts. It is surprising that an artist of Bhimsen Joshi's stature who can serve us better fare should treat us to the same menu again and gain. It seems that the popular concert artist has killed the creative artist in Joshi, which is a pity because his flexible, melodious voice and his sensitive, emotional temperament are the envy of many musicians. In spite of this, the fact remains that Bhimsen Joshi's great musical moments are truly great. He has enriched the Kirana gharānā by the sheer brilliance of his individual genius.

III. SAWAI GANDHARVA

Many of us know Sawai Gandharva as the distinguished teacher of Bhimsen Joshi, Gangubai Hangal and Firoz Dastur, but few know him by his voice. He died in 1952. His memory has been refreshed by a disc (ECLP 2430) which gives glimpses of his rare genius and fills a gap in our collection of Indian music.

Though Sawai Gandharva is one of our great vocalists, music did not come to him as naturally as leaves to a tree. He had to sweat for it. While he was lucky that he learnt under the able guidance of Abdul Karim Khan, he had the misfortune of losing his voice at the age of sixteen—a familiar phenomenon of adolescence. In his case it was sheer persistence which enabled him to overcome the difficulty. Sawai Gandharva is an instance of individual genius overcoming various difficulties, the innate instinct for melody overcoming all physical limitations.

Even so, his vocalism lacked natural ease and spontaneity of expression. There was an occasional tendency to suppress the voice. Perhaps he believed this would impart a Kirana sweetness to his utterance. All the same, the fact remains that he has the introspective touch which reminds us of his master's vocalism.

Sawai Gandharva hit upon his style not by luck but labour. His admirers like Vasant Rao Deshpande recall that even while he was the king of *mehfil*, he would start practising four hours before each concert so that he might strike the right note in the performance. Once he got into his stride, however, he could keep his listeners spellbound for hours.

These old memories are nostalgically recalled by the disc. Of the eleven pieces in the record, the most outstanding is Asavari which has been rendered with great feeling. It is embellished with brilliant *gamak tāns*. The fact that Sawai Gandharva was not a servile imitator of his guru can be seen from the profuse use he makes of *bol-tāns*. Yet, the master's stamp is always there. It is more obvious in Gujari Todi where certain melodic contours remind one of the same *rāga* rendered by Abdul Karim Khan.

Sawai Gandharva's Puriya Dhanashri '*Par Karo Araj Suno*' provides an interesting contrast with Bhimsen Joshi's rendering of the same composition. The latter scores over his teacher because he has a bolder voice and is able to incorporate more intricate *tān* patterns. For his fast figures, Joshi chose Kesarbai Kerkar and Amir Khan as his mentors; hence the same composition sounds far more trim in his case than Sawai Gandharva's.

As one belonging to the Kirana tradition, Sawai Gandharva is rather indifferent to the text of the composition, and poetic content is drowned in melody. Hence the *bolbānt* has its euphony but it lacks the clear enunciation of the Gwalior school.

There are certain rāgas in the record which do not have the Kirana touch about them. Among these are Tilak Kamod, Shankara, Bahar and Adana. They appear old-fashioned because such a style of singing disappeared with 78 r.p.m. discs. Yet the distinct genius of Sawai Gandharva shows itself in such pieces as Nat Malhar and Bhairavi. The former is a brilliant combination of the two modes which gives rise to many other compound rāgas, while the emotional Bhairavi would make many old-timers feel nostalgic about the pleasant evenings they passed hearing the magic of Sawai Gandharva's music.

IV. ABDUL KARIM KHAN

Abdul Karim Khan has left us about forty EP recordings. His strong point was ālāp rather than tār. He was fond of tarrying on a note—the elongation of a pitch—and had brilliant intonation which influenced all subsequent singers of the Kirana school.

Abdul Karim Khan was distinguished by his use of such musical ornaments as *kan* and *meend*. For this reason, he put more emphasis on melody than on rhythm. This unusual mastery of complex melody can be seen in his renderings of Bilawal, Deva Gandhar, Shuddha Kalyan and Abhogi Kanada.

Abdul Karim Khan's music gives peace and tranquillity. His vocalism provides an illustration for Wordsworth's lines : " Thus with eye made quiet/by the deep power of joy and power of harmony/we see into the life of things". This state of mind produced by graceful melody can be experienced in Abdul Karim Khan's renderings of Anand Bhaivavi and Bhimpalasi.

Among the earlier renderings of Abdul Karim Khan the most important are his medium-paced Khayāls in Basant and Bhimpalasi. In these renderings, Abdul Karim Khan shows his euphonious and pliant voice. The natural tessitura of his voice was in the upper octave. His Khayāl in Bhimpalasi, set to Jhaptal, has many brilliant melodic phrases. Here he shows his contemplative and spiritual approach to music.

Abdul Karim Khan had a voice very rich in the upper register. For this reason, he put his sam on tār Sa in his celebrated Bhairavi Thumri '*Jamuna ke Tir*'. Because he laid more emphasis on melody than on rhythm, all subsequent Kirana singers followed the principle shown in this contemplative rendering of Bhairavi.

In all, Abdul Karim Khan recorded eight Thumris. The Kirana singers included Thumri in their repertoires. Sawai Gandharva, Bhimsen Joshi and Firoz Dastur invariably sang Thumri after Khayāl. Abdul Karim Khan sang Thumri in Khayāl style and it was difficult to distinguish one from the other.

Abdul Karim Khan not only brought Carnatic rāgas into vogue but he also created new compositions in them. His composition '*Banira Rangila*' in Abhogi has won great popularity. He also brought into vogue the Carnatic style of singing sargam. Ashok D. Ranade has rightly said : "What he [Abdul Karim Khan] did was to incorporate certain Carnatic patterns of phrasing the Sargam (i.e., the sol-fa singing) in his Hindustani celebrations and to employ them without the colour of the Carnatic *gamak* style"². Subsequently many singers borrowed the Carnatic style of singing sargam, and incorporated it in their repertoires. Thus, in many respects, Abdul Karim Khan brought a strong Carnatic influence to bear on Hindustani music, on a scale no other artist had done.

Abdul Karim Khan was an ocean of melody. The pieces collected in his third LP are as fresh as his earlier records. Some of the melodic phrases in Darbari and Gujari Todi have memorable appeal. He has also sung a brilliant Tarana in Marwa. In all these renderings, he is the true voice of feeling. His three LPs establish the fact that he brought a rare euphony to Hindustani music which no other singer before him had done.

V. ABDUL WAHID KHAN

It is our good luck that Abdul Wahid Khan has been preserved by the archives of All India Radio. AIR, in collaboration with HMV, brought out a disc (ECLP 2541) of three rāgas rendered by the maestro whom the new generation had not heard so far.

Like other Kirana singers, Wahid Khan gives greater importance to melody than to rhythm. In all the three rāgas, rhythm is subdued by the sheer grandeur of melody. All the slow compositions are set to Jhoomra tāla.

Wahid Khan's rendering of Patdeep is outstanding. This rāga seems to have inspired all Kirana singers. The renderings of Patdeep by Abdul Karim Khan, Bhimsen Joshi and Hirabai Barodekar are equally superb. The addition of a natural nishād in place of the flat nishad of Bhimpalasi gives Patdeep a haunting touch. Wahid Khan's brilliant phrases in this rāga are an unforgettable experience. His Patdeep and Multani figure on the same side of the disc, but because of the brilliance of his phrasing, the Patdeep is more absorbing.

It is difficult to form a true picture of Wahid Khan's genius from his one LP. In this record, Patdeep is the only rāga which gives a glimpse of the genius of the old master. But Wahid Khan's rendering of Darbari shows his fatal flaw. Occasionally he overdid his elaboration of a rāga. Even his distinguished disciple

²On music and Musicians of Hindoostan p. 166.

Pandit Jeevan Lal Mattoo thought that on certain occasions Wahid Khan's badhat tended to be tedious. The rendering of Darbari is a case in point.

As mentioned earlier, Wahid Khan laid down a basis for the development of rāga, and this influenced musicians of the Kirana and other gharānās. Amir Khan was one of those influenced by the old master. It is often believed that the pioneer of the Indore school was a self-taught musician. What is not seen is that Amir Khan borrowed his vilambit style from Wahid Khan and his drut style from Aman Ali Khan. It is because of the influence of Wahid Khan that Amir Khan occasionally took an hour to reach the gāndhāra of the middle octave of Darbari.

Wahid Khan and Amir Khan had one favourite tāla—Jhoomra. They could do their elaboration at great length. Both aspired for serenity and poise. This can be seen in their renderings of Darbari. Amir Khan learnt the use of silence and pause in improvisation from Abdul Wahid Khan. Both were interested in all possible melodic permutations. Amir Khan also borrowed his sargam patterns from Wahid Khan who sang brilliant phrases in Darbari.

These elements can be seen in Wahid Khan's rendering of Darbari, '*Gumani Jag*'. In this rāga, the main text has no rhythmic variation. Wahid Khan weaves brilliant vibrato around gāndhāra and *dhaivat*. He joins the pitches of various notes by meends. This can be seen in Patdeep where one tān is repeated in sargam. This is unusual in Kirana singers. Yet Wahid Khan together with Abdul Karim Khan is a pioneer of the Kirana school.

VI. HIRABAI BARODEKAR

Hirabai Barodekar, a disciple of Wahid Khan, has sweet liquid grace in her soft, delicate melody. She combines the highbrow classicism of her teacher with a liking for forms such as Bhajan. Her devotional song in Bhairavi, '*Bhaj Mathura Hari Nam*' has the same poignant appeal as Bhimsen Joshi's Brahmanand Bhajan.

Hirabai Barodekar sings her vilambit Khayāl as efficiently as drut Khayāl. For this reason, she does not sing her vilambit khayāl in a tempo as slow as her teacher. But there are long pauses in her slow rendering of Yaman, after the manner of her gharana. There is also a dialogue with the Tabla-player in the Drut Khayāl of Yaman, which is an unusual element in Kirana vocalism.

Hirabai Barodekar's rendering of Multani is far superior to her Yaman. She will always be remembered for her haunting rendering of this rāga. The vilambit composition, '*Kavan Des Gaye*', is sung with great pathos and feeling. She makes good use of bolbānt but does not care much for rhythmic play. Her fast

composition matches the slow composition where she describes the sorrow of a woman bereft of her lover. In this composition she sings fast figures with melodic leaps and zigzag movements. With her brilliant rendering of Multani, Yaman and Puriya Kalyan, she is firmly established as one of the great singers of the Kirana gharānā. Hirabai's sister Saraswati Rane was an equally gifted singer. Her brilliant composition in Jog Kauns, '*Payaliya Mori Re*', is justly celebrated.

VII. GANGUBAI HANGAL

Unlike most female singers, Gangubai Hangal has a bold, masculine voice. This can be seen in her rendering of Chandrakauns, '*Kab Ghar Aye*'. Like Bhimsen Joshi, she learnt the secret of open full-throated *akār* from her teacher Sawai Gandharva.

She became popular with her early recordings of Marwa and Bhairav. Her Marwa has the rugged grandeur of windswept plains. Her brilliant drut composition '*Sun Sun Batiyan*' has great melodic appeal, while her composition in Bhairav, '*Re Banat Ban*', starts with intricate *murki*.

Abhogi has been a popular raga with Kirana singers. Gangubai's Abhogi '*Charan Dhar Aye*' shows her gift for brilliant ornamentation. In this composition, there are many melodic leaps and subtle oscillations in pitch.

Her Asavari '*Ye Mata Bhavani*' has interesting ornamental gamak tāns. Like her teacher Sawai Gandharva, she concentrates on euphonious melody. She does not show much concern for proper enunciation of the text and is indifferent towards rhythm. But her brilliant recordings of Chandrakauns, Bhairav, Abhogi and Asavari are all-time achievements.

Marwa is the favourite rāga of Gangubai Hangal. She has recorded Marwa and Ahir Bhairav together (No. 2411-5091), but the Marwa is superior to the Ahir Bhairav. There are brilliant lyrical passages in her rendering of this rāga. Next to Amir Khan, this will remain the best rendering of Marwa. Her Tarānā in this rāga is equally exhilarating. She has the poise and spaciousness typical of her school. She has added solidity and masculine vigour to the grace of the Kirana gharānā.

VIII. FIROZ DASTUR

Together with Bhimsen Joshi and Gangubai Hangal, Pandit Firoz Dastur is a distinguished disciple of Sawai Gandharva. In his recorded rendering of Jaunpuri (240331) there is systematic note-by-note elaboration in the Kirana style. Typical of the school, there is fine elaboration of the rāga in the lower octave. Unlike



Clockwise from left : Firoz Dastur, Hirabai Barodekar, Gangubai Hangal.



Bhimsen Joshi, Dastur sings brilliant gamak tāns and sargam. This is unusual in the Kirana gharānā. Dastur sings many sargam patterns in his own characteristic style. These note-patterns, brilliantly interlaced with complex rhythm, gracefully cascade into one another. As the Jaunpuri gradually unfolds, the musical tension is slowly built up, establishing clearly the supremacy of the musical note. Jaunpuri is Darbari of the morning hours and Dastur successfully creates the atmosphere peculiar to the rāga. He has sung his own composition in this rāga and in Sur Malhar, also presented in this disc.

It is an index of Dastur's mastery of rhythm that he chooses to sing a slow Khayāl in Sur Malhar in Roopak tāla of seven beats. Not many artists elaborate a rāga in this time-measure so gracefully. In spite of the difficult time-cycle, the vilambit Khayāl has great rhythmic animation. As in Jaunpuri, so in this rāga, the sargam-patterns are sung brilliantly. The rendering also testifies to Firoz Dastur's skill as a composer.

Unfortunately, there is nothing new about Dastur's Thumri in Sarpada, popularly known as 'Gopal'. The whole piece reminds one of Abdul Karim Khan's rendering. Here, Dastur is not able to evolve one original phrase of his own. He sings the notes of the upper octave exactly like Abdul Karim Khan. The rendering has the spiritual strain of Abdul Karim Khan but it has no originality.

Firoz Dastur is chiefly known as a singer of Khayāl. Here he developed his own style with an emphasis on systematic elaboration. His recordings of Jaunpuri and Sur Malhar show that he is one of the genuine representatives of the Kirana gharānā, with the sweetness characteristic of the school.



DISCOGRAPHY

- I. BHIMSEN JOSHI
1. EALP 1280 (HMV): Rāgas Miyan ki Todi, Puriya Dhanashri, Ghara Thumri.
2. EALP 1321 (HMV): Yaman Kalyan, Multani.
3. EALP 1328 (HMV): Chhaya, Chhaya Malhar, Darbari, Kanada, Suha Kanada.
4. ECLP 2253 (HMV): Miyan ki Malhar, Puriya Kalyan.
5. ECLP 2264 (HMV): Lalit, Shuddha Kalyan.
6. ECLP 2276 (HMV): Malkauns, Maru Bihag.
7. S-MOAE 5010 (HMV): Komal Rishab Asavari, Todi, Marwa.
8. TEPE 1210 (HMV): Darbari.
9. TEPE 1234 (HMV): Bhairavi Bhajan, rāga Abhogi.
10. TEPE 1246 (HMV): Todi, Jogia Thumri.
11. EASD 1501 (HMV): Lalit Bhatiyar, Kalashree.
12. EASD 1513 (HMV): Durga, Puriya.
13. EASD 1515 (HMV): Gaud Sarang, Brindabani Sarang.

II. SAWAI GANDHARVA

ECLP 2430 (HMV): 11 rāgas.

III. ABDUL KARIM KHAN

1. GCI 33ECX 325 (HMV): 8 rāgas.
2. GCI 33 ECX 3252 : 8 rāgas.

IV. ABDUL WAHEED KHAN

1. GCI ECLP 2541 : Patdeep, Multani, Darbari Kanada.

V. HIRABAI BARODEKAR

1. GEIELLP 2275 : Multani, Yaman.
2. 7EPE 1205 : Bhairavi Bhajan, Shyam Kalyan.

VI. GANGUBAI HANGAL

1. ECLP 2855 : 6 rāgas.
2. No. 2411-5091 : Ahir Bhairav, Marwa.

VII. FIROZ DASTUR

1. Premium Stereo 0240331 : Rāgas Jaunpuri, Sur Malhar, Thumri Sarparda.