

# THE GWALIOR GHARANA OF KHAYAL

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The different *gharanas* in Khayal-singing have not only helped to preserve and perpetuate the older traditions through an unbroken lineage of *Guru-shishya-parampara*, but also added much colour and infinite variety to Hindustani Music. In an article on "*Aspects of Karnatic Music*", the late Sri G.N. Balasubramaniam (a famous performing artiste and scholar) wrote almost longingly:-

"Unlike the Karnatak system, the Hindustani system is more elastic and flexible and comparatively free from inhibitions and restrictions. For instance, in the North there are several *Gharanas*—each one handling one and the same raga differently. In the South everywhere, every raga is rendered alike".

It is this scope for variety, choice of suitable style, and flights of fancy that have maintained the popularity of the *Khayal* up till now. The precursors of the *Khayal* also used to be rendered in different styles. In ancient *granthas*, we come across mention of different types of "*Geetis*" such as "*Shudhdha*", "*Bhinna*", "*Goudi*", "*Vesari*", and "*Saadhaarant*". When the golden age of the *Dhrupad* began (during the Middle Ages), *Dhrupad-gayan* also had developed four "*Baanis*" (meaning styles, or schools) namely,:- "*Goudi*" or "*Gobarhari*", "*Daggur*", "*Khandar*", and "*Nowhar*".

When the majestic and ponderous *Dhrupad* had to give place to the classico-romantic *Khayal*-form, the latter was developed and perfected into various styles which came to be known as "*Gharanas*". These "*gharanas*" gave an attractive variety to *Khayal*-singing,—each "*gharana*" developing its own distinctive features, although all of them were deeply rooted in a common underlying tradition or "*Susampradaya*". The differences lie in the type of voice-production, manner of rendering the "*bandishes*", enunciation, musical idioms and accents, method of elaboration, types of taans, accent on swara, sahitya, or laya, and so on.

The bond of continuity through the unique "Guru-shishya-parampara", the tradition of oral transmission of the arts from guru to disciple from generation to generation, and the magnificent royal patronage that the musicians received in the sheltered darbars in the 18th and 19th centuries, were chiefly responsible for the growth and preservation of these different gharanas. Each Ustad jealously guarded his art, did his daily "riyaz" in strict secrecy, and imparted his wealth of compositions and style only to his own blood-relations (sons, sons-in-law, nephews, grandchildren etc), or sometimes to extra-ordinarily devoted disciples who served the gurus and the art with single-minded devotion.

In her article on "*Evolution of Indian Music*", Dr. Sumati Mutatkar says:-

"During the last days of the Moghul Empire, and especially after its downfall, the court-music to which it had given birth, travelled to the princely states. Of these, Gwalior which was already known for music on account of Raja Man (the greatest champion of Dhrupad), Jaipur, Udaipur, Rampur, Alwar, Lucknow, Baroda, and Hyderabad were prominent. Under the liberal and loving patronage of the rulers of these states, music continued to develop through the efforts of talented and diligent musicians who strove for perfection by concentration and constant practice. In course of time, the various schools or *gharānās* became more and more isolated. Every gharana in its blind anxiety to preserve its distinctive musical style, developed a kind of arrogance towards all music which differed from its own—The style of each gharana became, so to speak, a jealously guarded trade-secret".

However, in spite of all this fierce loyalty and secrecy, the earliest gharanas exerted a lot of mutual influence because the maestros migrating from darbar to darbar effected a lot of interconnections between *gharanas*.

The Khayal style is said to have been polished and popularised by Sadarang (Niyamat Khan) and Adarang (Firoz Khan) while they lived incognito in Lucknow for some years in order to escape their imperial patron's wrath. Later on, the Emperor Mohammad Shah Rangeela was so fascinated by the newly evolved Khayal-style that he welcomed the two composers back into his court with honour, and encouraged the style. In a way, we may say that the *Khayal was born in Lucknow, patronised in Delhi, and reached the pinnacle of its glory in Gwalior. Thus, the Delhi, Lucknow, and Gwalior Gharanas were the earliest in the history of the Khayal.*

Bahadur Shah Zafar, the last emperor of Delhi was not only a great patron of Khayal, but was himself a good composer. Many of his compositions under his pseudonym "*Sokhrang*" have been preserved by the exponents of the "Delhi (Dilli) gharana". Bahadur Shah's ustad, *Miyan Achapal* (Ghulam Hussain) is considered the founder of the Delhi gharana of Khayal.

He was a contemporary of Lucknow's Bade Mohammad Khan. There were many great Khayal exponents in Lucknow as well as in Delhi; but in course of time, waning patronage forced them to abandon their home-towns and migrate to Gwalior where all of them received immense royal patronage. The synthesis of all these styles gave birth to the famous Gwalior Gharana.

Miya Achapal's prime disciple Ustad *Tanras Khan*—regarded as the most outstanding singer of Delhi gharana—migrated to Gwalior and became a Court-musician under Maharaja Jayajirao Scindia.

Meanwhile in Lucknow, *Ustads Bade Mohammad Khan* and his cousin *Naththan Peerbuksh* had risen to great prominence as outstanding exponents of the Lucknow Gharana. Bade Mohammad Khan (son of Shakkar Khan), and Naththan Peerbuksh (son of Mukhkhan Khan) were the descendants of *Ghulam Rasool Qawwal*, founder of the Lucknow gharana, specially of the Qawwal-Bachcha-style.

Frustrated at the waning patronage in Lucknow, these ustads migrated to Gwalior where they became prominent Court-musicians. *What was Lucknow's loss, became Gwalior's gain.* Although both Bade Mohammad Khan and Naththan Peerbuksh were trained in the same gharana, their styles were quite different. Through a synthesis of their two styles, a new style was created and this became famous as the 'Gwalior Gharana'. Naththan Peerbuksh is considered the founder of the Gwalior gharana. Thus the oldest Khayal-gharanas were the "Lucknow", "Delhi", and "Gwalior" ones; of these, *the Gwalior gharana is regarded as the source and fountain-head of several other gharanas.* Such was the all-pervading influence of this vast gharana that the great creators and exponents of several other gharanas like "Agra", "Jaipur-Atrauli", and "Patiala" (gharanas) imbibed much of their training from maestros of the Gwalior gharana. To give a few examples,—Gagge Khuda Baksh of the Agra gharana learnt his khayal-gayaki from Naththan Peerbuksh; Alladiya Khan of the Jaipur-Atrauli gharana was deeply influenced by the vocal style of Mubarak Ali Khan (son of Bade Mohammad Khan) who had become a court-musician in Jaipur. His (Lucknow) style considerably influenced the Jaipur gharana. Alia-Fatu, the famed exponents of Patiala gharana were trained by Tanras Khan of the Gwalior darbar. Rajab Ali Khan's father had learnt from Bade Mohammad Khan.

In an article on his own Gharana in the "Sangeet Kala Vihar" (February 57), Madhavbuwa Ingle (grandson of Gundobuwa Ingle, a direct disciple of the famed Pt. Balakrishnabuwa Ichalkaranjkar) gives a rather uncomplimentary story regarding *Bade Mohammad Khan*. Bade Mohammad Khan as well as his cousin-brother Naththan Peerbuksh and the latter's two sons *Qadimbux* and *Peerbux* had all migrated from Lucknow to Gwalior and become favourite court-musicians there. Jealous by nature, Bade Mohammad

Khan is believed to have poisoned Qadimbux to death. The latter's three sons *Hassu, Haddu, and Naththan Khans* were very young boys, and the death of their father won for them the deep sympathy of their patron Daulat Rao Scindia who decided to give every encouragement and the best possible training to the talented young boys, under their uncle Peerbux. The same policy was followed by Daulat Rao's successor Jankoji Maharaj who went a step further. He is said to have arranged for the boys to remain concealed to overhear Bade Mohammad Khan's secret "riyaz". Within a few months, the enormously talented sons of Qadimbux were able to imbibe the grandeur of the great ustad's style. In a special "mehfil" in the royal court, the young musicians copied Bade Mohammad Khan's "gayaki" so admirably that all the connoisseurs were greatly impressed. But Bade Mohammad Khan is said to have left the Court in a huff, and settled down in Rewa as the Court-musician there. Bade Mohammad Khan's was the rich "*Qawwal Bachcha*" style of Khayal—studded with various embellishments requiring much dexterity, and he was considered inimitable in this style. Haddu-Hassu Naththu brothers used to sing in the elaborate "*Kalawant*" style which was closer to the Dhrupad style. A synthesis of the two enriched the Gwalior gharana more than ever. Some of the *taans* of the "*Qawwal-Bachcha*" style were considered inimitable. There is a story that in one of the "mehfils", Hassu Khan produced the rare variety known as "*kadak-bijali taans*" ("thunder and lightning") so forcefully that some of his ribs were broken under the strain; he became bed-ridden, and died prematurely in the year 1850. But the family-traditions continued through Hassu's son Gul-e-Imam Khan and grandson Mehendi Hussain Khan, through Haddu's sons Rahmat Khan and Chote Mohammad Khan, and Naththu's adopted son Nissar Hussain Khan. *All of them who were direct descendants of Naththan Peerbux, became great exponents of the Gwalior Gharana and Court-musicians under the music-loving Scindias.*

Besides grooming the future generations in their own family, they trained a large number of Maharashtrian musicians whose "Shishya-parampara" (streams of disciples) won unprecedented prestige and popularity for the Gwalior gharana of Khayal singing. Among their pupils were distinguished names like *Balakrishnabuwa Ichalkaranjekar, Vasudev Joshi, and Babasahib Dixit* who became the pioneers in popularising Khayal singing all over Maharashtra. Even today, our great contemporary vocal maestros and the promising younger musicians tell me that the most appreciative and patient Khayal-audiences are to be found in every nook and corner of Maharashtra.

The most prominent disciples of Balakrishnabuwa Ichalkaranjekar were none other than Pt. *Vishnu Digambar Paluskar, Pt. Anant Manohar Joshi, Pt. Gundobuwa Ingle, Mirashibuwa* and several others. These distinguished musicians in their turn, devoted their entire lives to their music,—giving fine performances, and training a large number of disciples, most of whom

became quite famous and popular as performing artistes or as teachers, or as both! Pt. Vishnu Digambar Paluskar was an epoch-making personality in the field of Hindustani music just like his contemporary, the scholarly Pt. Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande. Through the large number of Music Colleges that these two savants founded in cities and towns all over North India, they not only upheld the traditions of Gwalior Gharana, but also won unprecedentedly vast popularity and respectability for Hindustani music. Pt. Paluskar's famous disciples like Vinayakrao Patwardhan, Shankarrao Vyas, Narayanrao Vyas, Prof B.R. Deodhar, Dattatreya V. Paluskar (Pandit Paluskar's own brilliant son), Narayan Moreswar Khare, Shankar Sreepad Bodas, Kashalkar, Pt. Omkarnath Thakur, V.C. Maudgalya etc. formed a veritable galaxy of performers, teachers, and propagators of the art. No wonder, the Gwalior gharana-tree grew and spread its branches all over the areas where Hindustani music thrives.

Like Pt. Digambar, Pt. Bhatkhande spread musical knowledge through various music colleges for which he personally trained excellent teachers (from already trained musicians) such as Raja Bhaiya Poonchwale, Sri Srikrishnanarayan Ratanjankar, Pt. Govind Narayan Natu, Sri Pathak and others. He also spread priceless treasures of traditional music through his *Kramik* series in which he included innumerable *bandishes* of the Gwalior gharana magnanimously given to him by friends and devotees like Raja Bhaiya.

Naththan Khan's adopted son *Nissar Hussain Khan* also became an outstanding exponent of the Gwalior gharana. It was he who groomed great musicians like Pt. Krishnarao Pandit, Ramkrishnabuwa Waze, Bhaurao and others; these musicians, in their turn, trained up their shishya-parampara which included well-known names like Krishnarao Shankar Pandit, Eknath Pandit, Pt. Haribhau Ghangrekar, Pt. Krishnarao Mulay and others. Saratchandra Arolkar, a doyen of the Gwalior gharana imbibed his art from many eminent gurus like Krishnarao Shankar Pandit, Eknath Pt, and Krishnarao Muley. Pt. Gajananarao Joshi is still a good performing musician in spite of old age; he is the son and leading disciple of Pt. Anant Manohar Joshi who had also been one of the early gurus of Dr. Ratanjankar. Laxman Krishnarao Pt. is the worthy son and pupil of his renowned father Pt. Krishnarao Shankar. Among Raja Bhaiya's vast shishya parampara, the names of Pt. G.N. Natu, Sri Rajurkar, Sri M.V. Kalvint, Sri Chinchore, V.J. Joshi, Sri Mahadkar, and Raja Bhaiya's own son Balasaheb Poonchwale may be mentioned, as they have devoted themselves to the art.

The number of well-known musicians that this gharana produced during its golden period has been unparalleled, and makes an impressive list. In "*Sajan Milap's*" special issue (1979), Sri Sharad Sathe has given a fairly comprehensive list:

"There are several maestros who made their valuable contributions to

this *gāyaki* and earned for it pride of place as the forerunner of the various styles of Khayal singing which came into vogue in the years to come. These include dhrupad-singer Chintamani Misra, Hassu Khan's disciples Baba Dixit and Masurkarbuwa, Haddu Khan's son Rahmat Khan, son-in-law Inayat Hussain Khan (later known as Khalifa of Sahaswan gharana), and his son-in-law Mushtaq Hussain Khan, Naththu Khan's adopted son Nissar Hussain Khan and his disciples Shankar and Eknath Pandit, thumri-singer Ganpat Bhaiya, Faiz Mohammad Khan, female singers Sukhaiya, Tataiya, and Chunna, Bala Guruji, Wasudeorao Joshi, Ramakrishnabuwa Vaze, Rajabhaiya Poonchwale, Balakrishnabuwa Ichalkaranjkar (pioneer in bringing Gwalior *gāyaki* to Maharashtra) and his disciples Vishnu Digambar Paluskar, Anant Manohar Joshi and Mirashibuwa, Krishnarao Shankar Pandit and his disciple Sharatchandra Arolkar are all considered to be—authentic representatives of the gharana”.

Sri Sharad Sathe adds that even great instrumentalists like Beenkars Bande Ali Khan and Krishnarao Mule, Senia Sitarist Amir Khan, and Sitar maestro Babu Khan drew inspiration from “this many-splendoured, multi-faceted vocalism”.

The Sarod-bāj of the great Sarod maestro ustad Hafiz Ali Khan and his renowned son ustad Amjad Ali Khan, has imbibed many of the impressive features of the Gwalior gharana.

The Gwalior Gayaki has been compared to a regal carriage for its dignity and majesty. It has been described as “*ashtaanga-pradhaan*” as it pays attention to various aspects such as *alap*, *bol-alap*, *taan-varieties*, *layakari*, *meend*, *gamak*, *murki*, *bahlawā* and other embellishments. Special attention is also paid to open *akaar* in voice-production, cultivation of a voice that can cover all three octaves, full and distinct rendering of the *asthayi* and *antara*, gradual development of the Khayals through *alaps*, *bol-alaps*, *taans*, *bol-taans* etc, use of a variety of *taans* (*gamak*, *sapaat* and so on), good breath-control to sustain long notes and prolonged taans ending smoothly on the “*mukhda*” and landing on the “*sam*”.

Gwalior style musicians do not believe in painfully slow “*ati vilambit laya*” in the *bada Khayal*. Gwalior-gharana has a rich variety of slow, *madhyalaya* (medium tempo), and *drut* khayals set in taals like *Tihwada*, *Jhoomra*, *Ektal*, *Adachautal*, *Roopak*, *Jhaptal*, *Trital*, *Sawari* etc. Those of us who have heard the contemporary veterans of this gharana as well as maestros of the recent past have a good idea of the dignity and vastness of this gharana. All of them genuinely prefer to sing expansive Shuddharagas which are numerous enough in Hindustani music. They do not generally go in for newly fangled or queer raga-combinations. Gwalior gayaki is an “orthodox”, balanced blend of *Sahitya*, *gayaki* and *laya*. The development is systematic and step-by-step; *taans* are at first short and simple;

gradually they become longer; the typical "*sapaat*" taans are like gushing jets of water which rush up and down in a straight line.

Gwalior gharana exponents have preserved also a large number of Tappas, Thumris, Taranas, Chaturangs, Trivats etc. But the Gwalior style of rendering Thumris, Tappas etc is somewhat different from the Banares style; the former is described as "Khayal-oriented", whereas the latter is said to be "Thumri-oriented". Raja Bhaiya has magnanimously published two volumes containing his rare collection of Thumris, Tappas, Taranas (all with notations), and Ashtapadis tuned by him.

There was a time when Gwalior gharana dominated Hindustani music. Even in the golden era of Dhrupad, this place had played a vital role. It had given us Tansen and many other Dhrupadiyas. Raja Man of Gwalior had held his great Assembly of Dhrupadiyas and compiled his important work-"*Maankutuhāl*" here. It is the eternal resting place of Sangeet Samrat Tansen and his spiritual preceptor Mohammad Ghaus. Later on, when the Khayal ousted Dhrupad from its peak, it reached the peak of its glory here through the "*Gwalior gharāna*" which gave us the *largest number* of exponents such as no other gharana has given us. Not only did the Gwalior-gharana become the fountainhead of various other gharanas, but Gwalior was the gateway through which Khayal entered Maharashtra. After long years of training in the true Gurukula style, great musicians like Pt. Balakrishnabuwa Ichalkaranjkar devoted their entire lives propagating their gayaki through numerous recitals, and also by grooming a large number of distinguished pupils like Pt. Vishnu Digambar Paluskar. Balakrishnabuwa's own son Annabuwa was a very good musician, but unfortunately, he died young. But we have heard many distinguished exponents of this gharana like Pt. Anant Manohar Joshi, his son Pt. Gajananrao Joshi, Mirashibuwa, Krishnarao, Pt. Raja Bhaiya, Ustad Mushtaq Hussain and others. Mushtaq Hussain's style was the rich essence of the Gwalior, Atrauli, and Sahaswan gharanas.

During the golden period of music in Gwalior, this place was so soaked in the art that "the very leaves would not tremble but to the sounds of music". Music mehfilis used to be part of the daily routine in the royal darbar. The princes and the people alike were absorbed in the pure enjoyment and appreciation of music day and night. "Even half-clad street-urchins would try to hum snatches of Khayals or taans!"

A peak period is generally followed by a period of decline. The numerous music colleges started under the inspiration and guidance of the two Vishnus (Vishnu Digambar and Vishnunarain Bhatkhande) or our music have all along continued to impart training, a great deal of it according to the Gwalior traditions. In these institutions, generations of music-students and music-lovers have been trained up. They have given us hundreds of knowledgeable

teachers too. But with the dwindling of the time-honoured *Gurukula* system, the number of impressive performing artistes has dwindled alarmingly. Music students are no longer willing to give their undivided attention to study of the art for years together in the close proximity of the guru. In today's highly commercialised and fiercely competitive world, very very few aspirants are prepared to devote 10 or 15 years of their life exclusively for imbibing this vast art at the feet of great masters whose numbers are dwindling alarmingly.

Gradually, the brilliant lamp of the fountainhead of Khayal gharanas has become steadily dimmer, while the little lamps lighted by other newer gharanas have begun to grow brighter and brighter. Like older actors who have to bow out of the limelight in favour of younger and more popular artistes, the older Khayal gharanas like "Lucknow", "Dilli" (Delhi) and "Gwalior" are gradually fading out, while other Gharanas have gained wide popular favour, and have been producing a large number of fine performing artistes. The future does not seem to augur well for the majestic old Gwalior gharana of Khayal.



**Ghulam Rasool Qawwal**

(Founder of Qawwal Bachcha Gharana—Lucknow).

