An Interrogative Analysis of the Imdadkhani Gharana of Hindustani Classical Music

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ABSTRACT

In this contribution, intricacies of the Imdadkhani Gharana of Sitar and Surbahar of Hindustani Classical Music are investigated. This endeavor provides a comprehensive study of the various distinct features of the Gharana, which makes it stand apart from the several other Gharanas. Though this Gharana is comparatively young, it became extensively popular by its sheer esthetics and attributes which were exquisitely framed by its founder “gurus” and subsequently by the improvisations made by the stalwarts of this Gharana. This manuscript outlays the various discrete and inherent features of the Gharana, such as its exquisite history, the tuning system, the modulations in the instrument and the Raga repertoire. The peculiarities of the Gharana are also exclusively portrayed in this contribution.

Keywords: Gharana, Raga, Sitar, Gayaki ang. Guru.

1. INTRODUCTION

We, the Indians inculcate all the three pillars of performing arts, that is, vocal music, instrumental music and dance into the definition of music. Perhaps, this notion can also be traced back in the very famous ancient and historic manuscript entitled “Sangeet Ratnakar”, where it has been said: “Geetam vadayam tatha nritayam trayam sangeetam uchatay” (Brahaspati, 2002) means music is defined as the art of singing, playing an instrument and dancing.

Under the Hindustani Classical Music, the tradition of “Gharana” system holds special importance. Perhaps, this feature is so unique that no where around the world can one find this sought of a tradition. The Gharana system is followed by both the North-Indian as well as the South-Indian forms of Indian classical music. In south India, the term Gharana is acknowledged by the word “Sampraya”. In ancient times, there existed several Samprayas such as the “Shivmat”, the “Bhramanmat” and the “Bharatmat” (Pranjpay, 1992). It is believed that in ancient times, there existed a single form of the style of Indian Classical Music. However, the advent of the Muslims had a great impact on the Indian Classical Music and this created a division into this form of music. This lead to the regeneration of two forms of Indian Classical Music: the Carnatic Music (The South Indian and otherwise the original version of Indian Classical Music.) and the Hindustani Music (The North Indian and the improvised version of the Indian Classical Music).

One of the most unique and exclusive feature which is incorporated in the teaching of Indian Classical Music is the “Guru-Shishya” tradition. Perhaps, in recent times, the education of Indian Classical Music is also imparted in several institutions, schools, colleges and universities. However, history and statistics reveal that even now the finest artists of the Indian Classical Music are produced through the “Guru-Shishya” tradition. In India, the Gharana system has contributed to all the three forms of music, that is, vocal, instrumental and dance.

The Gharana comes into existence through the confluence of the “Guru” and the “Shishya” (Chaube, 1977). A talented “Guru” through his intelligence, aptitude and shear practice creates a sense of uniqueness and exclusivity and thereby inculcates a special eminence into his form of music. These attributes and traits are amicably transferred into the talented “Shishya” and the particular form of the performing arts thus becomes a tradition. These exceptional qualities are in fact so strong and prominent that the audiences can immediately recognize the Gharana of the artist.

It is believed that when so ever the form or style created by the founder “Guru” is carried forth till three generations; it turns in to the form of “Gharana”. The name of the Gharana can be same as the name of the founder “Guru”, or came be named after the place where the founder “Guru” resided. For example, in the field of Hinduistani Vocal Music, there exists several Gharanas (Deshpande 1973) such as the Gwalior Gharana, the Dilli Gharana, the Kirana Gharana, the Agra Gharana etc. Similarly, under the Instrumental Music the Senia Gharana, the Senia Malhar Gharana, the Etawah Gharana and the Imdadkhani Gharana hold special place (Mankaran, 2000). Likewise, the Jaipur Gharana and the Lucknow Gharana are famous for dance (Shrivastav, 1985).

The Imdadakhani Gharana (BUDHADITYA, 2012), school of music traces its stems from the very ancient Gwalior Gharana. The founder of the tradition of the Imdadkhani Gharana was Ustad Sahabdad Hussain. He was intimately related to Ustad Haddu Khan of the Gwalior Gharana. In fact, he was brought up in his house and received training in Khayal singing from him. Ustad Shahabdad Hussain also used to play sitar. The Imdadkhani Gharana is named after Ustad Imad Khan, the son of Ustad Sahabdad Hussain. Ustad Imad Khan

IMDADKHANI GHARANA

This Gharana is named after Ustad Imad Khan, Sitar and Surbahar player and court musician at Indore. The Alap used by Imad Khan and Inayat Khan in Surbahar was simple, with extended Meends in Dhrupad style but without Muriks. The Sitar Gats, which are in Ragas, such as Bhairavi, Kafi and Khajari, show an excellent Jhala technique, while Talas are executed with traditional techniques.

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RESEARCH

Gharana: In Hindustani music, a Gharana is a system of social organization linking musicians or dancers by lineage or apprenticeship, and by adherence to a particular musical style. A Gharana also indicates a comprehensive musicalological ideology. This ideology sometimes changes substantially from one Gharana to another. It directly affects the thinking, teaching, performance and appreciation of music. The word Gharana comes from the Hindi word ‘ghar’, which means family or house. It typically refers to the place where the musical ideology originated; for example, some of the gharanas well known for singing khayals are: Agra, Gwalior, Indore, Jaipur, Kirana, and Patiala.

Raga: A raga is one of the melodic modes used in Indian classical music.

Sitar: The sitar is a plucked string instrument used mainly in Indian classical music, which is believed to have been derived from the ancient Indian instrument Veena and modified by a Mughal court musician to conform with the tastes of his Persian patrons and named after a Persian patrons and named after a Persian patron called the seTar (meaning “three strings”). Since then, it underwent many changes, and the modern sitar evolved in 18th century India. It derives its resonance from sympathetic strings, a long hollow neck and a gourd resonating chamber.

was born in Agra. He was the court musician of Indore. Ustad Imdad Khan was initially instigated into vocal music and later into sitar by his father. Subsequently, he learned and listened from a number of stalwarts and connoisseurs in this particular field and consequently cultivated a completely new style of sitar and surbahar playing. This eventually led to the establishment of a new Gharana called the Imdadkhani Gharana, also called the Etawah Gharana, after a village outside Agra where Ustad Imdad Khan lived. The Imdadkhani Gharana proliferated over from Etawah to Kolkata, Indore, Hyderabad, Mumbai and subsequently through the whole country.

Invariably as Ustad Imdad Khan, his son Ustad Enayat Khan was one of the most renowned Sitarists of the early 20th century. Credit remunerates to Ustad Enayat Khan for making the art of sitar playing more affable and popular for a larger audience in the cultural capital of India, which is Kolkata. Earlier to this, the Sitar was heard primarily in a lesser circle by music fanatics. Apart from popularization of this art, Ustad Enayat Khan also developed and improvised the architecture/design of the Sitar. Ustad Enayat Khan died at a very early age of only 43 and left four children. His son, the illustrious sitar maestro Ustad Vilayat Khan (VILAYAT, 2012, MEDIEVAL, 2012, WAJAHATKHAN, 2012) was the greatest exponent of the Imdadkhani Gharana and one of the most magnificent sitar player of all times. Pandit Bimalendu Mukherjee, the well-known sitarist and doyen of the Imdadkhani Gharana was also a disciple of Ustad Enayat Khan. His son and disciple, one of the greatest sitar players of all times, the world renowned sitarist, Pandit Budhadipta Mukherjee is the greatest stalwart of the Imdadkhani Gharana.

Section 2 of this manuscript provides a detailed description of the major features of the Imdadkhani Gharana. The detailed intricacies of the technique of the instrument have been analyzed. Tuning system and the structural modulations of the sitar under the Imdadkhani Gharana are described in section 3. A detailed study reveals the exclusive implications of the modulations, along with a brief comparison amongst the instrument design corresponding to the other Gharanas. This is followed by the raga repertoire in section 4. An informative and sequential study is made in this particular section. Finally, the conclusions are drawn in section 5.

2. MAJOR FEATURES OF THE IMDADKHANI GHARANA

The Imdadkhani Gharana inculcates a distinctive characteristic for the sitar playing called the gayaki ang. This refers to the technique of the sitar player when he comes as close as possible to the articulate potency and variety of human voice. Thus, this refers to the intonation of the human voice on the instrument. Under the Imdadakhan Gharana, the Raag Alaap was initiated in the conduct in which it is practiced in the khayal singing. The entire vocal embellishment of the khayal style was absorbed and integrated into the art of sitar playing. According to the capacity of the instrument, the string deflections were enlarged to at least five notes. The raga development inculturated the ‘Khatka-jhatka’ type of ‘alankars’ and the maximum exploitation of the ‘aans’, which is the continuity of the sound after the string plucking. Also, the plucking work was considerably improved and expanded to make the instrument more attractive. The rhythmic pattern was enriched tremendously by incorporating all the khayal taans, tabla-pakhwaj bols and the introduction of several rhythmic variations and subdivision of tempo. An explicit sequence and progression was inculcated into the playing of ‘gat-todha’ and the composition of splendid ‘todas’, with the subsequent matching ‘tehais’. Major structural transformations to both the Sitar and Surbahar & Foundation and development of the instrumental style known as the ‘gayaki ang’ are amongst the major achievements of the Imdadkhani Gharana.

3. TUNING SYSTEM AND STRUCTURAL MODULATIONS OF THE SITAR UNDER THE IMDADKHANI GHARANA

Tuning of an instrument depends prominently on the instrumentalist’s Gharana or style, convention and each artist’s respective inclination. The tonic in the Hindustani Classical system is insinuated as ‘Sadaj’. It refers to ‘sa’ or ‘kharaj’. Traditionally, the principal playing string is virtually tuned a perfect fourth above the tonic. Generally, the second string is tuned to the tonic. Subsequently, the sympathetic strings are tuned to the notes of the raga being played. Perhaps, there exists a minor aesthetic modification to the order of these and how they are tuned. Every Raga demands the re-tuning of the instrument. The strings are tuned by tuning hooks. Furthermore, the key playing strings can be fine-tuned by sliding a bead threaded on each string just below the bridge and also by very small and efficient steel pegs which are nowadays gaining popularity. A comparative analysis between the common tuning “Kharaj-Pancham” sitar (exercised by Pt. Ravi Shankar) and “Gandhar Pancham” (exercised under the Imdadkhani Gharana) is as follows:

In the ‘Kharaj-Pancham’ sitar (highly), Sa (middle) and Pa, whereas in the Imdadkhani school, the Kharaj string is played and substituted by a Fourth string, which is tuned to Ga. Inculcating these combinations, the sitarist produces a harmony Sa, Sa, Pa, Ga, or Sa, Ma, or Sa, Dha, Ga, contingent to the Raga which is being played. However, the Jod and the Baaj strings are tuned in the similar fashion in both the Gharanas. The Jod string is tuned to Sa and the Baaj string is tuned to Pancham.

Under the Imdadkhani Gharana, a large number of improvisations were made to the instrument for executing the Gayaki ang into the instrument. Ustad Vilayat Khan increased the thickness of the Tabli and the Tar-gahan. Also, a joint was introduced between the tumba and the stem, so that the instrument could withstand larger stress and strain. Furthermore, with the passage of time, the tumba was enlarged and stem became slightly broader. In order to cut down the metallic sound of the frets, Ustad Vilayat Khan supplanted the brass frets with an alloy of superior quality. Furthermore, the material and thickness of the strings were also critically modulated. The Baaj, Gandhar and the Pancham strings were steel strings of gauge number 3. The Jod string was made from brass with gauge number 27. All the Tarabs and the two Chikari strings were made of steel with gauge number 0.

Another major structural modification of the instrument was the removal of the upper tumba. During early times, when electronic amplification, were not plausible, this upper tumba was beneficiary in boosting the volume of the instrument with a better delivery of the harmonics. However, with the advancement of technology, the Imdadkhani Gharana sitar got devoid of this part and the stem efficiently served as a resonator. The jawari-bridge was considerably modified in a manner to provide a better acoustic experience. Moreover, the traditional ivory jawaris were replaced by ebony and polymer jawaris. The conventional sitar incorporated seven strings streaming over the main bridge. However, under the Imdadkhani Gharana the number of strings reduced to six. This lead to the removal of the lowest octave, but were replaced with strings tuned to the middle, which acted as fillers over and above the Chikari strings. These structural and tuning vicissitudes directly inculcated the Gayaki ang into the instrument.

4. THE RAGA REPertoire

The Imdadkhani Gharana is receptive to all the ancient, rare and well-established Ragas, but it has a convention of specializing in a certain Ragas for concert performances. However, this situation varies from artist to artist, as every individual has a different comprehension of the same Gharana to its different domains. As far as the historians, Ustad Enayat Khan and Ustad Imdad Khan concentrated on very few Ragas for concert performances. On the other hand, Ustad Vilayat Khan rendered the rarest Ragas to his audiences. Statistics suggest that the following Ragas have been extensively explored...
and performed by the stalwarts of the Imdadkhani Gharana: Ahir Bhairav, Lalit, Miyan ki Todi, Bhimpalasi, Shuddha Sarang, Marwa, Puriya, Puriya Kalyan, Bihag, Kedar, Kamod, Hameer, Shuddha Kalyan, Yaman, Jog, Vachaspati, Darbari Kanada etc.

Yet another distinct feature of the Imdadkhani Gharana is that most of the renditions are performed in the Teen taal, though explorations are also made in the Ek taal as well as Jhap taal. The various stalwarts of this Gharana have ardently played and explored the traditional and the mature ragas of the Hindustani Classical Music. They have shown little zeal and enthusiasm towards the creation of the new ragas. Every phrase of the raga is tried out in diverse ways and explored deeply to render the coveted harmonic melodious acoustics anticipated by the artist.

5. CONCLUSION
It is quite evident that the Imdadkhani Gharana has emerged as one of the most prominent and enduring pillar of the Hindustani Classical Music. The simplicity and exclusive magnificence of the Gharana has brewed it into a much coveted school of music. The “gayaki ang” is the biggest asset of this Gharana and leads to breaking of barriers between the vocal and instrumental music. The main attribute to the success and widespread popularity of the Gharana goes to its founder “gurus” and stalwarts, who brought about revolutions in the field of Indian Classical Music. This manuscript ascribes a detailed description of the basic traits inherent to this Gharana. Furthermore, a brief comparative analysis is also performed between this Gharana and the other prevalent Gharanas, based basically upon the tuning systems and the structural modification details of the instrument.

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT
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