



Development and characteristics of Agra-Atrauli Gharana of Khayal

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Abstract:

Agra gharana is usually mentioned in a same breath with the name of Ustad Faiyaz Khan. This gharana of khayal was derived from its preceding dhrupad tradition of nauhar baani. Later this gharana intermingled with Gwalior gayaki and a branch of Atrauli gharana resulting a new form of khayal gayaki, named as Agra-Atrauli gharana. There are some special stylistic features which greatly reflect its old dhrupad elements like nom-tom alaapchari or rhythmic perfection. A large number of marvelous compositions or “bandishes” by Agra singers are highly admirable. This research paper mainly talks about the origin, development and characteristics of Agra-Atrauli gharana of khayal. Here the main objectives are as follows: How the Agra and Atrauli gharanas are formed separately and merged into a single lineage., The historical background behind the origin of this gharana. Detailed discussion about the development of Agra-Atrauli gharana. The family lineage as well as the disciples and the representatives of this gharana. The unique gayaki of this gharana and its features. Some of the famous compositions of this tradition. This is a descriptive type of research paper that demands specific and authentic explanation of the topic. A number of methods were followed for the data collection and data analysis. Various books are read about this topic. A good look through of many journals and souvenirs were done. Some websites were browsed. Some exponents were interviewed. Recordings of this gharana were collected and analyzed.

Key Words : Agra-Atrauli, Khuda Baksh, Faiyaz, Barada, Gayaki

Research Paper

Indian music is in practice in a successive manner from the pre-vedic era. From then, numerous musical forms have evolved in Indian tradition of music. Vedic music, gandharva sangeet, desi sangeet, prabandha sangeet and many other contexts have arrived and gradually evolved into today’s dhrupad and khayal traditions. Indian music is flourished especially in Mughal era where musicians were supported by imperial patronage in and around Delhi. After Mughal disintegration musicians were migrated in all over the country and found alternative patronage in smaller courts. Gwalior, Baroda, Jaipur, Rampur, Mysuru, Tonk, Alwar and many other courts were gemmed with some brilliant musicians and became the most important courts for holding the musical tradition. The local cultural influence of different places intermingled with the original musical form resulted into different styles named “gharana”. Etymologically, Gharana is derived from “ghar” in Hindi or “griha” in Sanskrit that means a lineage or a family. Musically it defines a distinctive musical style that is established at least for three generations by either family descendants or disciples.^[1]

Like other genres of Indian classical music, multiple gharanas of khayal also exist. Agra gharana is one of the oldest of them. Later, an offshoot of Atrauli gharana immensely merged with the Agra style and the amalgamation was mentioned jointly as “Agra-Atrauli gharana”.^[2] This gharana is recognized by its very special stylistic features which are originally derived from dhrupad.

Origin of Agra-Atrauli gharana:

Agra city (situated approximately 233 km southeast to Delhi) was founded by Sikandar Lodi on 1509. In thirteenth century, Nayak Gopal, a Hindu Rajput dhrupadiya from Devgiri court, originated the Agra style.^[3] Some early names of his disciples were found like Alakh Das, Malakh Das, Khalak Das, Lohang Das and others. In sixteenth century, Sujaan Singh (or Sujaan Das) and his brother Bichitra Singh, two exceptionally brilliant disciples of Alakh Das were settled in Agra. Both the brothers embraced Islam and Sujaan Singh was assigned in Akbar’s Empire as Haji Sujaan Khan. According to Ain-e-Akbari by Abul Fazl

and Raag-Darpan by Fakirullah, Haji Sujaan Khan was contemporary of Miyan Taansen and was recognized as 'Deepakjyot'.^[4] The descendants of Haji Sujaan Khan and his brother were Surjan Khan, Daiyum Khan Sarasrang, Kaiyum Khan Shyamrang and others. All were renowned exponents in dhrupad-dhamaar gayaki of Nauhar Bani.

Kaiyum Khan had four sons named Jungu Khan, Sushu Khan, Gulaab Khan and Khuda Baksh. Amongst them, Khuda Baksh had a very rough and hoarse voice so that he was neglected by the family members and was entitled as "ghagge" for his lifetime. Consequently, Khuda Baksh left his home with a broken heart and went to Natthan Peer Baksh (descendant of qwawaal bacche) of Gwalior. There he received a miraculous training of khayal for fourteen years that completely transformed his voice into a magnificent one. After his return to Agra, he was highly admired by all. Khuda Baksh introduced a new style of khayal tradition which was a combination of his former dhrupad style and the new Gwalior gayaki of Natthan Peer Baksh. Thenceforth, khayal tradition came to be adopted in Agra during nineteenth century and Agra Gharana of khayal is formed.^[5]

In eighteenth century, four brothers named Hidayat Khan, Mogal Khan, Kareem Hussain and Jabbar Khan, presumed as the progenitors of Atrauli gharana, migrated from Gwalior to Atrauli of Uttar Pradesh. Gradually they interweaved with Agra gharana by scholastic exchange and marital relationships which further enriched the Agra style of khayal. This bonding turned up into one single gharana, known as "Agra-Atrauli gharana".^[6]

Lineage and development of Agra-Atrauli gharana:

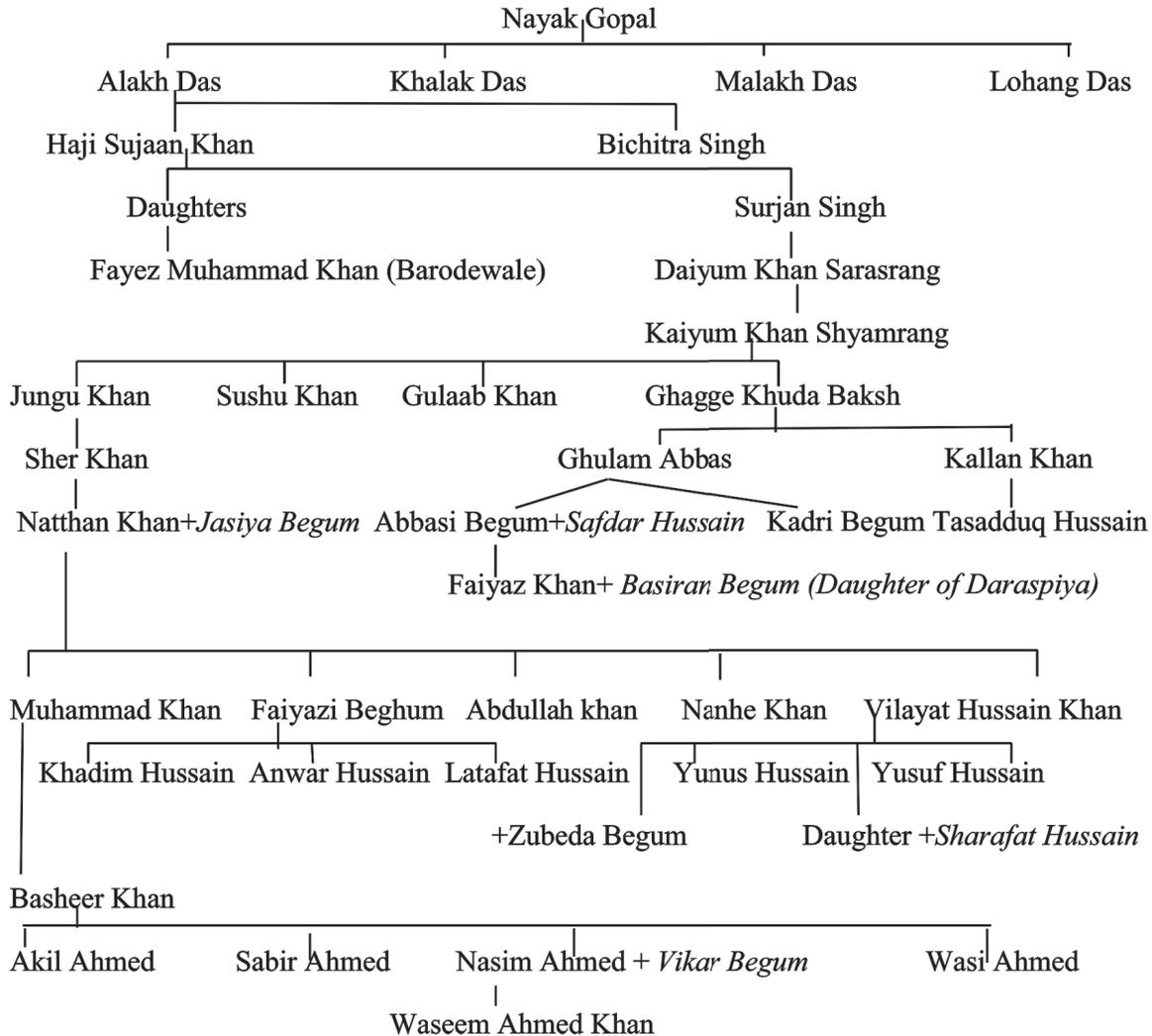
Like all other gharanas, Agra gharana is also perpetuated by family members as well as non-family members or disciples. Khuda Baksh started training of his new khayal style to his nephew Sher Khan and his two sons Ghulam Abbas Khan and Ghulam Hyder Khan (Kallan Khan) who became three most important pillars of the Agra school. Apart from that, Khuda Baksh transmitted his gayaki to some non-members also without any distinction of caste and creed. Pandit Vishambhar Din, Munshi Ghulam Hussain, Ali Baksh Khan Bharatpurwale, Pandit Shivdin and some others were upskilled by him. Munshi Ghulam Hussain, son of Kareem Hussain of Atrauli was the most initial connection of Agra and Atrauli.^[7] From then on, the musical talents of Agra began to disperse countrywide as

they were in much demand in the darbaars of Nawaabs. Khuda Baksh settled in Jaipur Court (during the reign of Sawai Ram Singh), his son Ghulam Abbas had been in the courts of Jaipur, Alwar, Tonk, Mysuru, Rampur etc. and Kallan Khan was in Jaipur during the reign of Maharaja Madho Singh. Sher Khan and his son Natthan Khan (also known as Nissar Hussain), both were solely responsible for the popularization of this style into Maharashtra and Karnataka.^[8]

In the meantime, Atrauli and Agra made up their minds to unite their bloodlines by marital relationships. Jasiya Beghum (she was daughter of Lal Khan and sister of Mehboob Khan Daraspiya) of Atrauli and Natthan Khan (son of Sher Khan) of Agra tied the knot and the two gharanas were united in a ceremonial occasion for the very first time. Among their descendants Muhammad Khan, Abdullah Khan, Vilayat Hussain Khan and Bade Nanhe Khan were very accomplished singers those days. They had a daughter named Faiyazi Beghum who was married with Altaf Hussain Khan of Atrauli and blessed with three eminent maestros of this lineage: Khadim Hussain Khan, Anwar Hussain Khan and Latafat Hussain Khan. Yunus Hussain Khan and Yusuf Hussain Khan, sons of Vilayat Hussain Khan were highly competent singers. Vilayat Hussain's son-in-law, Sharafat Hussain Khan was another gem of the lot. Muhammad Khan's son Basheer Khan had four sons and among them, Nasim Ahmed Khan's (married to Vikar Beghum, daughter of Atta Hussain Khan Daraspiya) son Waseem Ahmed Khan is one of the finest torchbearer of this gharana these days.^[9] Ghulam Abbas had two daughters named Abbasi Beghum and Kadri beghum. Kallan Khan had a daughter, Haidari Beghum (married to Muhammad Khan of Agra) and a son, Tasadduq Hussain Khan, who was again a great musician and a very scholar person of the lineage. He worked in a school (Sangeet high school) in Baroda.^[10]

Abbasi Beghum was married to Safdar Hussain Khan of Sikendrabad, a representative of Rangile gharana.^[11] They were blessed with a son, named Faiyaz Khan, the real master of Agra-Atrauli school. Faiyaz Khan started his training from his uncle, Fida Hussain Khan as he lost his father before his birth. Later little Faiyaz Khan and his mother were moved to Agra and he was groomed mainly by his maternal grandfather Ghulam Abbas Khan and other family elders. Faiyaz Khan was married with the daughter of Fayeze Muhammad of Gwalior and daughter of Mehboob Khan Daraspiya of Atrauli. He received a good guidance and a lot of

beautiful compositions from Daraspiya.^[12] He was greatly influenced by Bhaiya Ganpatrao and Maijuddin in the field of light classical music like thumri, dadra, kajri chaiti etc.^[13] Faiyaz Khan centered in Baroda court as a court musician and gave a number of magical performances in cities and darbaars all over the country. His magnificent voice, exclusive style of skillful representation, charismatic appeal and incredible command on “chaumukhi gayan” (ability to perform dhrupad, dhamar, khayal and thumri with the same mastery) took him on the top of the fame. He got honoured by a lot of awards in his life i.e. Aftaab-e-Mausiqui from Mysuru court, Gyan-ratna from Baroda court, Sangeet Ratnakar from Maurice College etc.^[14]



Flow chart: A brief outline of the lineage of Agra-Atrauli Gharana

Atta Hussain Khan (son of Mehboob Khan Daraspiya), Latafat Hussain Khan, Sharafat Hussain Khan were exclusively trained by Ustad Faiyaz Khan.

Agra-Atrauli gharana has a large number of disciples who spread over its fame far and wide from the very first day. Munshi Ghulam Hussain trained Ustad Alladiya Khan, the founder of Jaipur-Atrauli gharana.^[15] Zohra Bai Agrewali, a remarkable female singer, was trained by Sher Khan, Kallan Khan, Mehboob Khan Daraspiya and others. ^[16] Bhashkar Bua Bakhle was an extraordinary student of Natthan Khan. ^[17] Faiyaz Khan trained a lot of non-members i.e. Dilip Chandra Vedi, Dev Prasad Garg, Ajmat Hussain Khan Dilrang, Sri Krishna Ratanjankar, Dhruva Tara Joshi, Pandit Dinkar Kaikini, Swami Ballavdas, Malka Jaan, Siddheshwari Devi and many others. Khadim Hussain Khan taught Lalitha J. Rao, Babbanrao Haldankar, Jyotsna Bhole etc. Ravi Kichlu, Vijay Kichlu, Shafi Ahmed Khan, Pandit Jagannath Bua Purohit, Kumar Prasad Mukherjee, Deepali Nag, C. R. Vyas, Jitendra Abhisheki, Sumati Mutatkar, Sunil Bose, Subhra Guha and many others are well known exponents of this gharana.

[18] Some Jaipur-Atrauli singers also received training from Agra e.g. Kesarbai Kerkar from Bhashkar Bua, Moghubai Kurdikar from Vilayat Hussain Khan, Kishori Amonkar from Anwar Hussain etc.[19]

Stylistic features or “Gayaki” of Agra-Atrauli gharana:

As mentioned above, Agra-Atrauli style of khayal is based on dhrupad-dhamar tradition. Basically, this is a combination of three different styles. Agra’s dhrupad tradition of nauhar baani, Atrauli’s dhrupad tradition of gauhar bani and the new khayal tradition of Natthan Peer Baksh, fused in such a way that gave birth a new style of khayal gayaki primarily based on elements of dhrupad.[20]

There is no available record of Agra style before 1900. The first record of Agra gayaki is of Zohra Bai Agrewali and later some recordings of old aged Faiyaz Khan with his tuberculosis affected lungs which are the only evidences of the original style. So we have to assume the features of the previous style from those recordings, some written texts and the experiences of their contemporary artists and scholars.[21]

Agra singers always have a tendency to throw their robust voice forcefully which is an outcome of its dhrupad origin. ‘Shuddha aakar’ or full-throated voice and ‘dum-saans’ or long breath are two more important features of this style. The command in lower register is also a must. The “veera rasa” or masculine approach comes out prominently by the aggressive expression of notes.

Agra style is known for its rhythmic perfection as well as its “nom-tom alaapchari”. Just like the preceding dhrupad tradition Agra singers always like to present a full-scale “alaap” and “jor” before the composition or “bandish”. They unfold the raga note by note with use of meends, lehaks, gamaks and other elements which mostly reflect the “dhrupad ang”. Purity of raagas is always maintained throughout the performance. Bandish is presented after the alaapchari and Agra singers are masters in “bandish bharna”. The “asthayee-antara” of bandish is presented in “Nayaki ang” (as per Guru’s taleem) first followed by the “Gayaki ang” (creative renditions applied by the artist). The preferred tempo of vilambit composition is not very slow and the bandish is ornamented with vistaar followed by some exclusive rhythmic patterns like behelwa, bol-baant and bol taans with critical rhythmic divisions where the tabla simultaneously converses with the vocal. Drut

bandish is presented with “bol-banana” to emphasize the “sahitya”. Though very fast taans and sargams are not very popular in this style but Sharafat Hussain Khan is a big exception in that case. Halak taan, gamak taan, sapat, phoot, pukaar and other elements are presented in the taan portion. Teentaal, ektaal, jhumra, jhaptaal, ada-chautaal are mainly preferred for compositions. [22]

There are some raagas sung exclusively in this gharana like Jog, Lalita Gauri, Khambawati, Hussaini Kanada, Barwa, Nat Bihag, Nat Kamod, Poorvi, Jaijwanti, Jhinjhoti, Paraj Kanada, Chhaya Bihag, Bihari Kalyan, Patamanjari etc. following its typical style of presentation. Many historians opine that some of these raagas are created in this gharana (i.e., Hussaini Kanada by Ustad Yunus Hussain Khan). Application of different shrutis like teevra, teevratara, sakari swar etc. is one of the distinct features of this gharana.

Composers

Agra-Atrauli Gharana is famous for some great composers of all time. From Haji Sujaan Khan they are always famous for their musical compositions and poetry. There is a tradition among composers to use a pen name in their compositions. Daraspiya (Mehboob Khan), Prempiya (Faiyaz Khan), Pranpiya (Vilayat Hussain Khan), Binodpiya (Tasadduq Hussain Khan), Sajanpiya (Khadim Hussain Khan), Ratanpiya (Atta Hussain Khan) and many others were known for their marvelous compositions. “Karam kare to sab ban aaye” in raag bhairav, “Ankhiyan un sang laagi” in raag jhinjhoti (composed by Daraspiya); “Eri ali piya bin” in raag yaman (composed by Abdullah Khan); “Sajan more ghar aye” in raag jog, “More mandar ablou nahi aye” in raag jaijwanti, “Chatur sughar baiyan” in raag kedar (composed by Faiyaz Khan) etc. are a few examples from the treasure trove that were appreciated and popularized in other gharanas as well. It should be mentioned here that being a composer, Vilayat Hussain Khan was a very knowledgeable person and his “Sangeetayon ke sansmaran” is a very precious book of Indian classical music.[23]

Conclusion

In the musical heritage of our culture, Agra-Atrauli gharana is unique in its own way. It has established its new style of khayal with the conglomeration of two lineages of music and their musical exchanges which manifested itself among all the other gayakis till date. The vocalists of this gharana are specialized in dhrupad-ang khayal gayaki with a very good conception of

rhythm. Alaapchhari, bandish bharna, bol-baant, layakari are the exclusive features of this style. They have a large repertoire of rare and complex raagas and their bandishes. The composers of this gharana are considered as the cream of the crop of all time. In conclusion, it may be said that the new khayal style introduced by Ghagge Khuda Baksh is well-preserved by his successors. Not only that, this gayaki became so famous that many musicians of other gharanas, both in vocal and instrumental music, were largely influenced by this style. The ever-living compositions or bandishes of this tradition are always cherished by all the music lovers. There is no doubt that Agra-Atrauli gharana has enriched our music so far. A number of notable representatives are bearing the flag of Agra-Atrauli gharana these days.

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