

THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF GWALIOR GHARANA

Abhay Dubey

In Hindustani Music, even today gharana gayaki is still recognized. A distinct difference has been observed among the students who have learnt music from a music-school and students who have learnt music under guidance of a guru from gharana. This difference is reflected in their performance style. The senior artists imparted music training to only those learners who had the potentiality to grasp the musical style of that particular gharana. In musical schools the teaching method, time limits, syllabus all these have restrictions to a certain limit, in contrast to this, ***“In gharanas there are no such bindings and restrictions. It provides complete freedom of expressing the Raga followed by the style of gharana. It pass from one generation to next generation”***.

Any art gains reputation only when that art is patronized by the Kings. If we ransack the history of Gwalior music, we come to know that music art was highly patronized by Gwalior Kings and those Kings offered profuse financial funds and awards to music artists.

King Mansingh fostered Dhrupad Style so as the King Daulat Rao Scindia patronized Khyal gayan. When a King takes interest in fostering and patronizing an art then certainly that art flourishes.

During the reign of Daulat Rao Scindia, Bade Mohammad Khan from a Kawaal family of Lucknow came to Gwalior and gained a position of royal court singer. Bade Mohammad Khan was the son of Gulam Rasool and student of Shakkar Khan. Shakkar Khan and Makhan Khan being brothers were unparalleled singers.

“Nathan Peerbaksha son of Makhan Khan founded the Gwalior tradition and Haddu-Hassu developed this tradition. After this the Maharashtrian Brahmin families’ students propagated this music tradition in whole of India. In the gayaki Nathan Peer Baksh realized the depth of Dhrupad. He incorporated gayaki in Khyal. During those days in Khyal singing there was fickleness Nathan Khan had two sons Kadir Baksha and Peer Baksha. Kadir Baksha was appointed as a singer in the royal court of Daulat Rao Scindia in Gwalior. later on he was recognized as a Sangeet Guru. But because of his great fame he was murdered by his foes out of jealousy”. (Madhya Pradesh ke Sangeetnya by Pyarelal Shrimal, P. 180).

Some scholars believe that Nathan and Peer Baksh there were not two persons but one and the same. While Sushil Kumar Chaube Ji and Vilayat Hussain Khan are of the view that they were two different persons (As told by Vishwanath Ringe Ji) after the death of Kadir Baksh King Daulat Rao Scindia patronized Nathan Peer Baksh and his three grandsons. Kadir Khan’s three

sons were Haddu Khan, Hassu Khan and Natthu Khan. These three sons gifted with sharp intellect attained perfection in Dhrupad styled Khyal and King Scindia has soft corner for these three artists. The King also desired that the singing style of Firat and Taan of Bade Mohammad Khan should be taught to them. So King Scindia devised a plan. He asked the three artists to hide themselves behind a curtain and listen to Mohammad Khan. The three brothers did so and listened Mohammad Khan's singing for years with the result these brothers became perfect in singing.

One day the King asked the three brothers to sing first, as they went on singing Bade Mohammad immediately understood the secret. However the three artists were highly applauded but Bade Mohammad out of anguish and jealousy could not tolerate it hence he left Gwalior forever. Thus these three brothers created an innovative style of singing by mixing their own style with the style of Bade Mohammad Khan. Now this unique style of singing is known as Gwalior Gharana.

Gwalior is considered to be the premier & oldest Gharana in the sphere of Khyal singing of North Indian Classical singing. All the music Gharanas of the country accept their origin and relation with Gwalior Gharana only. So this gharana is most ancient and originator of Khyal singing. The world – wide fame Gwalior gharana achieved is due to the long Guru – Shishya tradition. Many schools at different places founded to propagate the Gwalior gayaki. The chief among them are Gandharva Mahamandal, Shankar Gandharva Mahavidyalaya and Madhav Sangeet Mahavidyalaya.

“To be acquainted with the famous singing style of Gwalior gharana, we should know a few specialities of this gharana. First of all, simplicity and clarity, the main attribute of older literature and Art is simplicity and explicitly”. (Hamare Adhunik Sangeet, Dr. Sushil Kumar Chaube, P. 24)

Pandit Krishna Rao is of the view that though” every gharana has its own speciality yet Ashtang Pradhan speciality of Khyal in Gwalior style is not found elsewhere”. (Madhya Varti, Mohan Nad Karni P. 45)

According to Amaresh Chandra Chaube,” Gwalior gharana is considered to be the basic source of all gharanas” (Khyal Gayaki ke gharana our Unki Sarthakta, Amaresh Chandra Chaube, Kala Saurabla 1976 – 78).

The depth of Dhrupad, Tappa, Tarana and Ashtpadi is very skillfully incorporated in the Khyal gayaki of Gwalior, special attention was also paid to laya taal and Swar. This way the artist had an ample scope to display the specialities of every part in a proper sequence. In Gwalior style it is not just one or two parts over which attention is to be paid, but on to all the parts (Ashtang 8 parts). These eight parts are alap, Bol alap, Boltaan, meend, gamak, khatke, murki and laykari. This style of singing is continuously going on for the last 300 years. Now these are the highlights of Gwalior style.

According to Krishna Rao Pandit, for originating and developing an individual style the element of individuality plays a vital role. He stresses over this fact that the artists of Gwalior gharana normally develop their singing style according to the prescribed discipline. Pandit further adds that it is a matter of pride that because of its long Guru Shisya tradition, the Gwalior gharana has gained unity in diversity (Madhyavarti, by Mohan Nadkarni, (P. 47 – 48)

Among the specialities of Gwalior gharana right posture and purity in Vani (voice) are of special consideration. Right Posture means to sit in a proper straight posture with right facial expression and body language to sing with natural adequate volume with an open throat is the speciality of the Gwalior singing. Although there is a lacking of complex and marveling taans but it is kept in mind that the taan should be used with proper voice and in purest form with full clarity. Taan with gamak also occupies a special position here.

Normally it is observed that while using diverse styles special attention is paid at all the parts (Anga). In some styles notes get high position and Laya (tempo) seems to be ignored. While singing in a Vilambit Laya i.e. very slow Laya, bandish loses its elegance but In Gwalior gharana style, the Alap, bolalap, bahlava, layakari, boltaan and taan all are paid equal attention that's why it is called a balanced singing (Gwalior Parampara Vinay Chandra Maudgalya, Sangit Kala Vihar, May 1993, P.9).

The following are the salient features of Gwalior gharana

1. *Mainly Popular ragas are sung*
2. *Open throated natural voice production.*
3. *Voice is prepared in a normal manner for the three Saptaks.*
4. *Much stress is on Kharaj practice.*
5. *straight taans, palte, aarohi, avarohi taan and Firat Taan are mostly used.*
6. *The laya is Madhya Vilambit and not Ati Vilambit.*
7. *boltaan and bolalap Gamak, meend, Khatka and Mukri etc. are used in creative way.*
8. *Bandish is presented artistically and according to that the raga is improvised.*
9. *A raga is presented explicitly and its avirbhav and tirobhava are not used in the expansion of a raag.*

1. **Singing Of Popular Ragas** Ragas mainly sung in Gwalior gharana are **Alaiya, Bilawal, Bhairav, Yaman, Bhoopali, Hamir, Kedar, Kamod, Basant, Paraj, Gaud – Sarang, Miyam Malhar, Shankara, Sarang, Darbari Kabda, Bahar, Shree, Multani, Gaud – Malhar, Bihag, Khamaj, Kafi, Todi, Malkauns, Jaunpuri, Sohani, Bheempalasi, Jayjaywanti and Bhairvi**. It is not because the Gwalior Singers had less knowledge of the rare ragas, but

the audiences are expected to know the behavior of a raag and its beauty. This way the audience relishes the pleasure of the raag.

2. Open throated and Natural Voice Production

Khyal singing with open natural throat voice production is the peculiarity of Gwalior gharana. Artificial voice has no room here and natural voice is always emphasized. Gwalior singing is always in masculine voice and every Swar is used with adequate force.

The Sangeet Ratnakar describes the twenty two attributes of a singer wherein Ayakt Kanth is also mentioned. Ayat Kanth means that the singer has a command over his voice and whose presentation is forceful. (Sangeet Visharad by Vasant, P. 149).

The Gayaki of Gwalior is forceful and lively. According to Sushil Kumar Chaube, In gayaki, there should be melody but it should have a force. A thin voice has no relation with it. The melody of Rahmat Khan was different than the melody of Abdul Kareem Khan. (P. 226)

Pandit Krishna Rao Shankar Pandit has written that an artificial voice is not used in Gwalior gayaki, on the contrary it should be forceful. (Tansen Samaroh Patrika, 1960, article Gwalior Ki khyal gayaki Shaily). This way a glimpse of Dhrupad is also reflected in Khyal of Gwalior gayaki.

3. **VOICE PREPARED IN NATURAL METHOD WITH THE THREE SAPTAKS:** Voice is prepared for all the three Saptaks. Much stress is laid on the melody, adequate pause on a particular Swar. To polish their voice the singers practise Kharaj(lower octave notes) in Gwalior gharana. The Voice may revolve in three Saptaks and weightage, melody and stillness is maintained in voice, on all these attention is paid. For getting much ability in voice, different swaras and Alankaars are used.
4. **MUCH STRESS ON KHARAJ SADHANA:** Kharaj practice is a must, if all the three Saptaks are used in the Gayaki it enriches the beauty and marvel.
5. **Straight Taan,Palte, Arohi – Avarohi, taan and Firat taan** Many taans are used in this gharana for example taan of Alankar, Koot taan, Firat etc. In this style the taan corresponds to the voice, specially in Gwalior style the plain and straight taans are used.

In every raag according to the class of the raag a particular form is determined of straight taan. The form of raag, Varja Swar, etc kept in mind for making straight taan. Such taans beginnings from one Saptak continue up to three and half Saptaks. The use of these taans depends upon the dexterity of the singer. In a Raag there is a sequence of Aroh and Avaroh with this sequence there is all round scope to make taan and expand the Raag.

Even in Vakra raag these taans are used by skilled singers according to the form of raag. This way there is no raag-bhang and the usage of taans appears to be pleasing.

Two swaras in taans are used to make it more powerful. According to the form of raag, giving weightage on distinct swaras and using them in two – two pairs makes taans more appealing. Often double swaras in straight taan are not used in Arohi kram, if used it loses its force. In Avrohi kram their usage gives a special impact in singing. In Vakra raag, the usage of double swar is for the fulfillment of Varja swar and to make a balance in taal and taan. When a singer initially uses Avroh then Aroh, he uses the swaras in sequence then it is called Palte-taan. Eventually such taans are used in Antara. Antara mostly sung in Madhya Saptak and taar Saptak hence the taan of Palte is carried from Madhya up to taar Saptak. The taans of Aroh ascend towards Aroh and the taans of Avaroh are in descending order.

6. **The Laya of taal as compared to Ati Vilambit it is Madhya Vilambit** : In Gwalior Gayaki the Laya of Composition is not ati Vilambit but it is Sadharan Vilambit, which does not diminish the beauty of the wording of Khyal. In the ati Vilambit Laya, Taal is not explicit and after the beginning of avartan and approaching up to Sam, the structure is not visible. In the Sadharan Vilambit Laya the taal is co-related with its parts, hence it does not lose its structure.

In one Avartan(Rhythmic Cycle) from Sam(first beat) to another Sam(first beat) there appears tightness which builds laya. After beginning of the taal it appears that the next Sam is approaching in this way taal closely relates to laya of taal. In the bandish of Khyal, laya has a Vital role therefore the laya of taal is not ati Vilambit but Sadharan Vilambit. Thus, listeners do not feel boredom and there is an attraction in the whole composition.

Pandit Krishna Rao Pandit says, “In Gwalior gharana the laya of Khyal is Madhya laya because if the laya is Ati Vilambit then the beauty of bandish is diminished”. (Gwalior ki Khyal gayan Shaily, P.12).

According to Pandit Ji Khyal is a form of a geet if it is presented with Vilambit laya, it would lose its importance and its beauty. The speciality of the geet – recitation is diminished then how a listener can relish the blending of words, dhun and Theka and this is the essence of this gharana. (Madhyavarti Lekhak, Mohan Nadkarni, P.46).

This is the reason in Gwalior Gharana, Sadharan Vilambit is used in Khyal singing. Bade Khyal are usually sung in Tilwada, Ada Chautal, Jhumra, ektaal. In this gharana the Laya of taal identifies with gayaki. The skilled singers, in each matra of taal use their gayaki according to the laya, and Alaps are also knitted in laya of taal. Thus one feels a lusture in the whole Performance.

7. In bol Alap and bol taans; gamak, meend, Khatke, murki are used artistically:

In Alap and bol alaps different types of swaras are used in multiple forms hence there is no repetition. The texture of a raag is knitted with alap so by first alap the form of raag is reflected. According to the raag its nature, its flow and Varja Swar keeping in mind, alaps are used. While using bol alap the Hrswa and Dirgh swaras are also cared and there is synchronization in gayan.

After the Alap, gamak is used in Bolalap and this makes the gayaki more effective. The Meend Khatke and Murki are used according to the artistic imagination. Gamak produces a special effect in boltaan. A massive stress on main swar and using subordinate swaras, gamak is elevated, thus using a taan it sounds as if there is a thunder in the cloud, and a depth in singing arises and it marvels. According to raag swaroop the use of two Swaras each in Bol taan carries weightage.

8. Creative presentation of Bandish and expansion of raag in accordance with it.

In Gwalior Gharana, Raag is improvised as per the bandish. In one Raag many bandishes are sung and every bandish possess its own beauty. The singers of Gwalior Gharana practice singing of 15 to 20 bandishes in one raag. A bandish is learnt by a student as it is taught to him by his teacher. Every bandish reflects the beauty of its raag. In bandish as the beauty of raag evolves, with that pace the gayaki progresses.

Some important points are kept in mind they are: how much stress is to be given on each swar which swar–Sangatis are to be projected and how to present a bandish according to its raag. For the bandish of Khyal in Gwalior many issues are to be viewed for instance, correct pronunciations of the words of bandish, expressing emotions and appropriate use of meend, Khatke taan, murki and gamak . After singing Sthayi and Antara, when the singer begins the Upaj then raag assumes a unique shape and the swaras wets the inner conscious of the audience. Thus learning with a guru has its own importance, this type of learning is called Seena – baseena taleem.

Gwalior gharana is renowned by its Taksali bandish. The traditional Bandishes are mostly of Dhrupad ang wherein the special features of Dhrupad are incorporated. Bandish is often said to be the very basis and soul of raag. It is important to mind which are nyas swars, which swaras are Varj,. By Bandish, style of a gharana is assessed.

In Gwalior gharana Straight line conception is followed. To present a raag in a normal straight way and to raise it adequately is a tough task. To sing in straight way and to improvise the Raag in straight way is possible only by a skilled singer. That is why it is difficult to imbibe the Gwalior Gayaki. Gwalior gayaki of course, is not complex; much importance is given to simplicity. In complex singing the bhava and Rasa cannot be relished

nor the normal form of raag is visualized. Thus to sing in a straight line conception is much more difficult than in a complex structure. reason, to maintain the raag swaroop in straight line conception is far more difficult .

9. A Raag is presented explicitly, avirbhav and tirobhava are not used in the expansion of a raag.

Gwalior gharana enjoys a reputation in presenting a raag very explicitly. While singing a raag, in between when there is a reflection of a similar natured raag then it is called tirobhava. After this, with the help of main raga when a raag is presented then it is called avirbhav. This method is not used in Gwalior gharana. The reason behind is to maintain the purity of a raag and this is the prime factor in this gharana. In fact avirbhav and tirobhava process in raag, entertains the public and creates an illusion also. This illusion is removed when the raag roop is clarified again and this removal is with the help of main raag. Although other gharanas use it yet in Gwalior Gharana it is a tradition to present clearly the raag . However, by this method raag roop is implicit for a short time which is not proper from purity of raag point, That is why this method is not used in Gwalior gharana.

In this way, the Gwalior gayaki is recognized as ancient and authentic. Most of the Gharanas have emerged from Gwalior gharana. Thus, *Gwalior gharana is recognized as the mother of gharanas.*

The apex singer of Gwalior gharana, Pandit Krishna Rao Pandit, says “The Gwalior Khyal gayaki while presenting Dhrupad, dhamar, thumri, tappa leverages its attributes to high extent that is why this style is superfluous as compared to all other styles”. (Madhyavarti, author, Mohan Nadkarni, P. 46).

Restraint, glamour, dignity, weightage, honour, reputation, all these are the virtues of this gharana. The audience is highly impressed with its glamour, its impression, its nature and self – respect and this is the reason this gayaki is regarded as superb, serious and ever glowing.