



Swaranjali Music School

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Visharad Poorna Theory

2006 Syllabus: Akhil Bharatiya Gandharva Mahavidyalay Mandal – India

www.abgmvm.org

Theory: Written Exam Paper # 1:

Chapter 9: History of Vocal Music Gharaanaa (Music Families)

In the field of music, the word 'Gharaanaa' has a special meaning and place. It is a subject of many discussions in conferences and publications. Gharaanaa means a family or a clan.

We will study 'Music Gharaanaa' concept with following points:

1. What is a Gharaanaa?
2. Names of Vocal Music Gharaanaas
3. How are Gharaanaas formed?
4. Lineage of Gharaanaas
5. Differences of opinions about Gharaanaas
6. Specialties, principles and essence of Gharaanaas
7. Disciples of major Gharaanaas
8. Characteristics of major Gharaanaas: Gwalior, Aagraa, Jayapur, Kiraanaa
9. Merits-demerits, contributions, necessity of Gharaanaas

1. What is a Gharaanaa?

Like any family, a 'Vocal Gharaanaa' also has similar consistent characteristics in society, relations, behavior patterns, customs, rules, principles, discipline, work ethics, training methods, music presentation style, contribution to music and culture etc. All these traits specific to a 'Gharaanaa' are continuously passed onto the new generation of students. Customs and procedures established by ancestors are faithfully preserved and carried out by descendants and new students. This group of people consisting of generations of teachers and students all following their particular methodology for learning, practicing and performing music is called a "Gharaanaa". Similar to all genetic families, these music 'Gharaanaa' also keep and pass on family traditions and teachings of prominent ancestors. This legacy of strict discipline and emulation through the generations is called a "Gharaanaa". In the field of music, there are vocal, dance, instrumental, Sitaar, Thumri 'Gharaanaa'. Each gharaanaa has its own specialties and disciples.

2. Vocal Gharaanaa names:

We will discuss vocal gharaanaa performing khyaal singing, from North Indian Classical music field. Main gharaanaa are: Gwalior, Aagraa, Jayapur, Kiraanaa, Delhi, Patiyaalaa etc. Some other gharaanaa came into existence and others disappeared. Some gharaana merged with each other. Some of them changed their core principles and moved on. The evolution of gharaanaa continues through cycles of creation, growth and dissipation. Some gharaanaa thrive because of contribution from strong and effective members. Gharaanaa from South Indian Classical Music are called 'Sampradaay'.

Gharaanaa is named after the town of residence of the main artist who creates that particular Gharaanaa. Gharaanaa are formed rather easily. However, keeping the tradition of the Gharaanaa alive through the following years with students, performing artists and consistently pleasing the audience proves to be a much harder task. Apart from the Gharaanaa mentioned above, there are many others: Bhandi Baajaar, Kabaalbacche, Mathuraa Indore, Raampur, Rangilaa, Atrauli, Sahasavaan, Khurjaa, Sahaaranpur, Fatehapur, Talvandi, Mevaatee, Gokhale, Muraadaabaad, Shaamchuraasee etc.

3. How and why are Gharaanaa formed?

What are the conditions that create Gharaanaa?

Following reasons may create a new Gharaanaa:

- Ambition to show some unique creativity that is different from existing norms
- Showcase special acquired intellectual skills
- Recognizable unique artistic performances including swar, layakaaree, taan, boltaan, voice development
- Competition, ambition, ego
- Voice characters, practice patterns, performance style, diversity

A Gharaanaa with good disciplined values will flourish and continue through generations of students. Without discipline or values, a Gharaanaa will languish and disappear.

Various styles of performances also form Gharaanaa.

Examples:

- Gwalior Gharaanaa: Balanced khyaal, Behelaavaa, Layakaaree, Taan, various composition types
- Jayapur Gharaanaa: Focus on Swar and Laya
- Kiraanaa Gharaanaa: Emphasis on performance like string instruments
- Aagraa Gharaanaa: Practice or riyaz in Mandra Saptak (lower octave), Husky voice, 'Nomtom'

4. Creation of a Gharaanaa and hereditary evolution

Gwalior Gharaanaa is considered to be an original gharaanaa. All other Gharaanaa originated from Gwalior Gharaanaa. Natthan Peer Baksha gave Gwalior Gharaanaa its own identity. His grandsons Hassu and Haddu Khan developed Gwalior Gharaanaa into a massive and strong clan. Pandit Balkrushnabua Ichalkaranjekar carried this tradition into Maharashtra state and created a robust and immense group of students in Gwalior Gharaanaa style.

Natthan Peer Baksha's student Ustaad Ghagge Khudaabaksha received training in Gwalior Gharaanaa tradition and then formed a new Gharaanaa called Aagraa Gharaanaa. Natthan Peer Baksha's nephew Mubaarak Ali Khan started Jayapur Gharaanaa. Gwalior's Hassu-Haddu Khan's student Ustaad Bande Ali Khan was called 'Beenkaar' since he played a string instrument or 'Been'. He started Kiraanaa Gharaanaa. Many other big and small Gharaanaa formed and flourished.

In this manner, Gharaanaa kept the traditions going, developed novel styles of performances and lighted new musical paths for future generations.

5. Differences of Opinion about Gharaanaa

Some scholars think Gwalior Gharaanaa is the first all inclusive, traditional clan of musicians and all other Gharaanaa originated from Gwalior Gharaanaa. Some others think Delhi Gharaanaa is the main Gharaanaa. Still others consider Jayapur Gharaanaa to be eminent or Kiraanaa Gharaanaa to be special.

For example: Pandit V. H. Deshpande emphasized Jayapur Gharaanaa, Dr. Sahradshchandra Paranjape thought Delhi Gharaanaa is the oldest, Dr. N. R. Marulkar described Gwalior, Aagraa, Jayapur, Kiraanaa Gharaanaa and also mentioned 'Women's Gharaanaa' and 'Gokhale Gharaanaa'. 'Naadapiyaa' Pandit V. R. Athavale said Gwalior, Aagraa and Jayapur are the three main Gharaanaa and also mentioned Kiraanaa, Sahasavaan, Patiyaalaa, Bendibaajaar Gharaanaa. Pandit Sharadchandra Aarolkar theorized that Gwalior Gharaanaa is the original Gharaanaa and its golden time period was from last half of 18th century till end of 19th century.

In light of all these difference of opinion, following observations can be made about various Gharaanaa and their specialties and principles.

6. Specialties, principles and essence of various Gharaanaa

- Each Gharaanaa has its own discipline and procedures. Each Gharaanaa always has three elements: Swar, Laya and Lyrics-emotion. The way these three elements are used and presented is different for each Gharaanaa.
- Each Gharaanaa has its own style about beauty and sweet melodies. Strong style transforms into a gharaanaa. However, an individual artist's performance style is his/her own specific method. That is not a called Gharaanaa.
- Main element of a Gharaanaa includes studying and teaching, teacher-disciple relations, rigorous practice sessions. It requires a face to face instruction from a reputed teacher. A musical dynasty or a Gharaanaa cannot be created just by listening to music. Generations of respectable, generous and scholarly teachers and deserving, hard-working, tenacious, humble students are all necessary to keep the traditions alive and flourishing through the centuries.
- To form a Gharaanaa, a new, previously unknown style of performance is essential.
- Only a strong, talented, ideal, innovative, skilled performer can form a Gharaanaa. Only then his/her special style will be an inspirational doctrine to his/her students.
- To call a group of connected musicians a Gharaanaa, here should be a robust consistent tradition of at least three generations of teacher-student pairs. Performance style created by the founder of the Gharaanaa should continue its dominance through to the third generation. Then it is becomes worthy of a title 'Gharaanaa'. The three generations may be genetic links with children and grandchildren of the founder or his/her students.
- Imitation of the original style of the founder is absolutely necessary for maintaining purity of the Gharaanaa performance style. The performance styles should be identical through generations of artists from same Gharaanaa. Gharaanaa becomes well known and popular with people when it becomes stable at all levels with its many skilled renditions.

7. Founders and students from main Gharaanaa

	Name of Gharaanaa	Founder	Students
1	Gwalior	Ustaad Naththan Peerbaksh, Hassu-Haddu Khan, Naththu Khan	Ustaad Rahimat Khan, Nisaar Hussain Khan, Balkrushnabua Ichalkaranjekar, Pandit Vishnu Digambar Paluskar, Shankarrao Pandit, Ramkrushnabua Vaze, Bhatebua, Rajabhaiya Poochvaale, Vyas Brothers (Shankarrao and Narayanrao Vyas), Pandit Onkarnath, Pandit Vinayakbua Patwardhan, B. R. Deodhar, Pandit Vinaychandra, Malini Rajurkar
2	Aagraa	Ghagge Khudabaksha, Gulaam Abbaas, Sherkhan	Naththan Khan, Ustad Faiyazkhan, Vilaayat husain khan, Pandit Bhaskarbua, Pandit C. R. Vyas, Ram Marathe, Pandit Jagannathbua Purohit (Gunidas)
3	Jayapur	Mubaarak Ali Khan, Ustad Alladiya Khan, Haidar Khan	Bhurjee Khan, Mogubai Kurdikar, Kesarbai Kerkar, Pandit Bhaskarbua Bakhle, Manjeekhan, Naththankhan, Gajaanabua Joshi, Nivruteebua, Sadolikarbua, Mallikarjun Mansoor, Jasdanvaalaa, Dhondutai, Menakaabai, Kishori Amonkar, Dr. Ashvini Bhide-Deshpande
4	Kiraanaa	Bande Ali Khan-Beenkaar (String Instrument player), Ustaad Vaheed Khan, Abdul Kareem khan	Muraad Khan, Savaai Gandharva, Rajabali Khan, Roshan Aaraa Begam, Fajj Mahammad Khan, Firoj Dastur, Sureshbaabu Maane, Hiraabai Badodekar, Pandit Bheemsen Joshee, Saraswatibai Raane, Gangubai Hangal, Prabhaa Atre
5	Delhi	Miyaan Achapal, Ustaad Taanras Khan	Umrao Khan, Gulaam Hussain, Gaame Khan, Chaand Khan, Naseer Ahamad Khan
6	Patiyaal	Bhaikaalu miyaan, Aaliyaa Fattu	Goharjaan, Amaanatali, Baakar Hussain, Najaakat Ali, Ustaad Bade Gulaam Ali Khan, Pandit Ajay Chakravartee
7	Bhendi Baajaar	Chhajju Khan, Najeer Khan, Khaadimhussain - - (three brothers) Amaan Ali Khan, Anjanibai Malpekar	Ustaad Amir Khan, Vasantrao Deshpande, Kumar Gandharva, T. D. Jaanorikar, Fidaa Ali, Paanduranga Aamberkar

8. Brief Notes: Specialties of some Gharaanaa

a. Gwalior Gharaanaa

- Most scholars agree that Gwalior Gharaanaa is a leading and dominant ghraanaa. This dynasty continued development and practice of singing Dhrupad-Dhamaar techniques, created and popularized khyaal singing style (vilambit or slow tempo development of raag). Dhrupad's strong influence and tradition of khyaal singing was stronghold of this gharaanaa. Ustaad Natthan Peer Baksha developed and shaped basic principles of Gwalior ghraanaa style performance. Hassu-Haddu Khan and Naththu Khan further added to the expansion and popularity of this gharaanaa by having large number of talented students and Gwalior gharaanaa was well known through out India.
- Gwalior style khyaal singing is similar to Dhrupad singing. Many different types of khyaal singing is also practiced by Gwalior Gharaanaa singers. Examples: Dhrupad style khyaal, Tappaa style khyaal, Khyaalnuma, raas khyaal etc. Gwalior ghraanaa singers also sing various genres of compositions, such as Tappaa, Chataranga, Trivat, Taraanaa, Raagsaagar, Raagmaalaa. Singing style is designed to fit the lyrics, taal, tempo etc. of the composition.
- Specific specialties of Gwalior Gharaanaa are: Open strong voice - resonating with taanpuraa and other accompanying instruments, practicing gentle-pleasant-spontaneous-simple singing with aakaar, eekaar, ukaar.
- Gwalior singers perform and develop well known and little known raag by singing sthaayee and antaraa of khyaal followed by creative beautiful aalaap using attractive swar clusters, meend, gamak, kana swar (grace notes) and paying special attention to vaadi saunvaadi and nyaas swar. Taar Shadja is always performed in most robust and loud manner. After expanding full antaraa, sthaayee mukhadaa is used again and again to showcase boltaan, layakaaree (bolupaj, layaupaj), bolbanaav, swar clusters (Sargam), attractive short taan and then after increasing the tempo further, robust and strong long taan are performed. Taan include both simple plain ascending and descending style as well as vakra (twisted or zigzag) style. Before singing the Mukhadaa, in one, one half, r one and half beat a quick short sophisticated piece of taan is performed and then 'Sam' is approached with considerable skill. In the beginning, some aalaap is performed in a particular raag. Then the vocalist starts khyaal in medium slow tempo. Ultra slow tempo is not used for khyaal. After khyaal, medium or fast tempo compositions are performed and full skilled presentation is achieved.
- Balanced singing style by equally presenting all facets of a raag is an important part of Gwalior Gharaanaa performer (Ashtaanga Gaayakee). Several stalwarts from Gwalior gharaanaa performed Ashtaanga Gaayakee (eight faceted singing) with full mastery. Examples: Shankarrao Pandit, Krushnarao Pandit, Raajaabhaiyaa Poochvaale, Baalaasaahab Poochvaale, Balkrushnabua Ichalkaranjekar, L. K. Pandit and their students.
- The eight facets of Gwalior Gharaanaa singing are: 1) Free, unrestricted, uninhibited, spontaneous and open aalaap, 2) Bol aalaap, 3) Bol Taan, 4) Various types of taan, 5) Layakaaree types (tempo variations), 6) Use of Meend, 7) Gamak styles, 8) Murkee
- Gwalior Gharaanaa singing gives equal importance to swar, laya, words and emotions of lyrics. Khyaal composition's full impact is realized by using effective skillful development and expansion of raag. This is a special basic style of Gwalior Gharaanaa singing.
- Many composers/singers from Gwalior Gharaanaa have created many compositions (both lyrics and notation) in several different genres and taal. Scholars call it a treasure trove of classical music compositions. There have been many music scholars, theoretical scientists, composers, writers, lyricists, vocalists from prestigious, prosperous as well as humble homes that belong to Gwalior Gharaanaa. There is also a tradition/heritage of Sitaar players in this Gharaanaa.
- All in all, Gwalior Gharaanaa is the most prominent, productive and admired Gharaanaa of all Gharaanaas.

b. Aagraa Gharaanaa

- Main artist and founder of Aagraa Gharaanaa is Ustaad Ghagge Khudaabaksha. He received training from Gwalior Gharaanaa's Ustaad Naththan Peerbaksha and then settled in the city of Aagraa. He started his own Aagraa Gharaanaa as a result of his unique voice. His voice was open, broad, nasal and more suited to mandra saptak. His habit of practicing and singing mostly in lower octave was unique and it started the tradition of Aagraa Gharaanaa.
- Aagraa Gharaanaa was largely influenced by Dhrupad and Dhamaar. Singing nom-tom is a specialty of this gharaanaa. Singing Dhrupad, Dhamaar and presenting pure character of a raag before singing khyaal by repeating phases like 'Ridanana', 'Tananana', 'Tanaa tom' (called Nom-Tom) before khyaal is a special skill developed by Aagraa gharaanaa. Expansion of raag is started by Nom-Tom in a very slow tempo (vilambit) in a robust strong voice and continued into fast and superfast tempo without taal before presenting a dhrupad or khyaal or a bandish with taal. Nom-Tom is very entertaining, beautiful and enjoyable. It needs a lot of stamina and skill. Nom-Tom gives special attention to 'layakaaree' (variations of tempo).
- Lower octave swar performed in robust loud, open voice in mandra saptak, sweetness, swar clusters with Meend, various Gamak styles, Murkee, Khatka, Ghaseet; Bol Aalaap – Bol Taan (Bol Upaj), Lay Upaj – Layakaaree (Tempo variations), Bolbaunt, Bolbanaav are performed in a particularly attractive manner. Aalaap, taan, boltaan are spectacular. This gharaanaa has Gouharbaanee.
- Medium tempo khyaal are also performed in a particular style. Along with the main (first) line of the lyrics, expansion is also performed creatively in various tempos on second-third line or on some words. Example: Ustaad Faiyaaz Khan used to sing a Bandish 'More mandir aba lou nahin aaye' in raag Jayjayvantee. He used to decorate the second line 'Kan mose chooka pari' beautifully with swar-laya variations.
- Several composers from Aagraa gharaanaa used aliases connected with word the 'Piyaa'. Examples: Ustaad Faiyaazkhan (Prema Piyaa), Vilaayat Hussain Khan (Praana Piyaa), Tassaduk Hussain (Vinoda Piyaa), Khaadim Hussain (Saajana Piyaa). Jagannaathbua (Gunidaas) also belonged to Aagraa Gharaanaa.

c. Jayapur Gharaanaa

- Ustaad Mubaarak Ali Khaan (son of 'Bade Mahammad Khan' from Gwalior gharaanaa) started Jayapur gharaanaa and Ustaad Allaadiyaa Khaan enhanced it to a respectable place in music field. Mubaarak Ali lived in Jayapur and he was a very intelligent and creative artist. He created a distinct Jayapur style of performance with sophisticated essence of swar and laya. Jayapur gharaanaa artists sing swar in pure, clear aakaar and perform them in various laya.
- Presenting unknown or little known raag or mix-raag is a specialty of Jayapur gharaanaa. Examples: Raag Nat, Khat, Khokar, Bihaagadaa, Gouree, Bahaaduree Todi, Saavane, Devasaakh, Kaafee Kaanadaa, Lacchaasaag, Jounabahaar etc.
- Performance style includes starting vilambit khyaal with very little expansion. Khyaal is improvised with swar in various laya, *aans*, *jhaar*, *meend* and creative, beautiful aalaap. Sometimes artist starts mukhadaa (beginning phrase of khyaal) without any introductory aalaap for introducing raag. Other times just sthaayee aalaap-taan is used to present full raag and gaayakee. Khyaal tempo (laya) is moderate (not extra slow or ati vilambit). Medium tempo bandish is presented in conjunction with khyaal. Taal like Tilvaadaa, Teentaal, Roopak etc. are used often.
- Special style is used for swar presentation. Each presentation has novel styles of bol aalaap, layakaaree, voice modulation, knocking taan, sophisticated presentation of complex taan. Taan singing style resembles putting knots into a string and then slowly unraveling the knots. Artist uses three octaves. Taar shadja is strong and true. Singing is full of surprising elements.

d. Kiraanaa Gharaanaa

- Founder of Kiraanaa gharaanaa was famous 'beenkaar' Bande Ali Khaan. He lived in a town called Kiraanaa in a state of Uttar Pradesh and he was Hassu-Haddu khaan's disciple and also their family's son in law. He received training in Gwalior gharaanaa style, modified it with his clever interpretation adapted to string instruments and created swar-pradhaan (dominated by swar) singing style. He promoted his new style by his native town – Kiraanaa. His students – Ustaad Vaheedkhaan, Abdul Kareem Khaan enhanced the popularity of Kiraanaa gharaanaa.
- Singing style is based on string instruments like Been, Veenaa, Saarangee. It includes kharja (mandra saptak) swar, strong shadja, improvisation spanning three octaves, prolonged emphasis on each swar.
- Kiraanaa gharaanaa style has special ability to build a beautiful streamlined tuneful picture of a raag. Aalaap, strong taan, full presentation of vilambit and Madhya laya compositions are specialties of this gharaanaa. Vilambit laya is slow and deliberate which lends itself to exquisite peaceful serene rendition and energetic expansion of swar.
- Along with khyaal singing, artists also perform Thumree, Daadraa, Naatyageet, Bhajan. They have a unique ability to present strong Shadja in kharja-madhya saptak as well as taar saptak. Swaraavalee is performed with relative ease.
- Abdul Kareem khaan was a very tuneful singer. He had full mastery over swar. Savaai Gandharva, Sureshbabu Mane, Gaankokilaa (Krushna tulasee) Hiraabai Badodekar, Bharatratna Bheemsen Joshi are some of Kiraan gharaanaa's prominent artists.
- Kiraanaa gharaanaa has kept good coordination between north Indian and south Indian (Hindustani and Karnatik) classical music styles.

9. Merits and demerits of Gharaana, contribution and necessity

All projects, arts, styles, characters have merits and demerits. Different styles of khyaal gaayakee, dedicated preparation for presentation, studiousness and contemplation, naayakee-gaayakee, collection of khyaal-taal-bandish, various genres of compositions, manner of singing swar, artistry, teacher-disciple tradition, study habits, importance of practice are the priceless gifts of gharaanaa traditions.

However, there are some challenges to gharaanaa concept. An artist belonging to a particular gharaanaa is expected to follow certain discipline for practice and sing according to a fixed given style on stage. Hence he/she should scrutinize the benefits gharaanaa has to offer before submitting to it. In past, people had reservations about gharaanaa because a student had to go and live in guru's house and serve the guru by performing chores etc. Strict discipline, studying and practicing day and night, learning only one style of singing, being at the mercy of a temperamental guru needed a lot of patience and retrain for a student. These were personal obstacles. You need discipline and faith to gain something worthwhile. In the field of music education, unique and special practice regimen and tenacious physical and mental attention is required.

After diligent study and practice of about twelve years, a student generally receives recognition. If one acquires good skills, fame follows. When an artist performs each concert as a quest and not harbor any desire for further compensation, he/she achieves great heights. Student has to learn to perform in concerts to entertain the audience. Good form will be evident when an artist incorporates beautiful expressions from all gharaanaa. Gharaanaa tradition has contributed immensely to music and music education. It is uniquely Indian. Even though gharaanaa differ in their styles and traditions, they are united in education and clan benefits.

In conclusion, even today, there are students who value lineage, loyalty and dedication to guru, goals and arts. They will work hard to find a suitable teacher and strive to be a worthy artist who will make a guru proud. When you search tenaciously, you find a way. When you study biographies of great artists, it becomes clear that a road to musical greatness is paved with great challenges and equally great rewards.

Teaching and studying have special aspects to it. Small institutes and music school/colleges can show you the way. Student can create wonders from such humble instructions by submitting to music. A music school or gharaanaa tradition, both require singular focus on the goal, hard consistent work, guru's accessibility, respect, good manners, modesty.

Pandit Bhaskarbua was fortunate enough to receive education from three gharaanaa. He had equal affection and respect for all three and he formed his own singular style from it. Ustaaad Nissar Hussain khan from Gwalior gharaanaa or Anjanibai Malpekar from Bhendibajaar gharaanaa used to grind one raag for two years. Now everyone is in a great hurry. People should think about what is worthwhile and right or wrong. Each gharaanaa has its own artistic view point. Students get a vision and audience sees the view point. This is the contribution of gharaanaa tradition.