

Appreciating Hindustani Music
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Lecture - 36
Gharana - Lecture Demonstration by Pt. Satyasheel Deshpande

Namaskar, I welcome you all to this episode of this course on Hindustani music on Swayam.org. We have with us today the renowned singer and musicologist Pandit Satyasheel Deshpande and accompanying him on tabla is Shri Dhananjay Kharwandikar. Satyasheel ji is known for the very wide perspective with which he looks at the world of Hindustani music so we're going hear a little bit from him about it today.

Namaskar, friends I'd like to specify right away that I might be a little older than most of you but an 'older student' is what I'd like you to think of me as it's not that I'm here to give a final verdict like a Supreme Court judge. I'm just a senior student and my study of this music has taught me that this music was sung through artists' individual expression for about 50-60 years. That kind of variety in sound, and diversity of aesthetics thought is not visible in today's generation. May be this is because communication media was absent at that time that's why Agra's Faiyaz Khan is very different from Kirana's Abdul Karim Khan in voice culture, in their temperament and attitude they are very different and at that time, no one felt the need for standardization.

That virus had not been born yet they were happy with their own specialties and the documentation work that I did for ten years, the most important thing I learnt was that every singer's music can only be appreciated by entering his emotional, cultural world, by trying to see who enjoyed his music and why! We can't stand in the square and claim that west is better than

east or that the beauty of the south is not there in the north! That would be stupid! you'd have to actually visit the north, go to the poles...go to the North Pole and the South Pole and then talk about it! otherwise you're just sitting in Benares, in the Greenwich mean time zone, and discussing the extreme climate of the world from your balanced, pleasant, temperature location!

So what I want to say is that these diverse attitudes and temperaments led to the creation of Gharanas. These diverse, varied temperaments (I might sound arrogant here) but when any aesthetic principle established by its founder gains followers, it turns into a gharana. Neither Abdul Karim Khansaheb nor Faiyaz Khansaheb wanted their gharanas to be established when Kumar Gandharva taught us, he had no wish either I'm a witness of course I wasn't born in Abdul Karim and Faiyaz Khansaheb's times but their aesthetics principles... they always kept changing themselves! if you listen to Kumarji's khyal, it changes every decade! Because he didn't want to establish a gharana by repeating himself so that followers would find it easy to grasp his music he was an artist who wanted to move on! someone who repeats himself can found a gharana anyway...You see, to reinterpret history, or past historical events is also a creative challenge.

And what happens in the context of our music is that traditional musical values never change only their expression changes. This is what is called a 'contemporary idiom'. Let me explain. Take, for instance, the lilt of a madhyalay (medium-tempo) composition. What a singer does in madhyalay I don't like to call it 'rhythmic play' I prefer to call it 'word-play'. Because the word is the singer's plectrum which he uses to create aghaat (accents) sometimes those accents are hard-hitting, sometimes soft and fleeting and this gives rise to different kinds of beauty. The difference between a strong stroke and a mild stroke (creates beauty that is) beyond the language-meaning of the words. Singers often make use of this, such as in the Agra gharana.

This kind of 'bol-banav' is word-play (rather than rhythm-play). But what is the traditional musical value here? To create a lilt in the medium tempo on an instrument, this would be called 'rhythm-work' since there are no words there. Now Faiyyaz Khansaheb did this his own way Babanrao Haldankar and his guru Khadim Hussain did in their own way. Babanrao did not copy Khadim Hussain but he removed ahead on the same path. Although my voice is not like my teacher Kumar Gandharva's, I have taken his approach to rhythm and built upon it, and derived joy from it.

So, traditional artistic values such as creating a lilt in the madhyalay, are eternal. But the Bhindibazar Gharana interpreted this value differently. But the principle (madhyalay lilt) is the same. Let me demonstrate.

[Music](Demonstrated Agra Gharana's Madhyalay). This word, 'prem' is not there in the composition. It has been put in to facilitate word-play. 'Prem' was Faiyaz Khan's pen-name. It isn't there in the Bandish. It enables repetition, right? [Music].

Now, as compared to the Agra singers. I sing this bandish differently. Because I have been taught, by Prof. BR Deodhar that this Raga, Barwa, is a combination of ragas Desi and Sindhura hence the re-ma phrase in the end. Latafat Khansaheb doesn't do this but he is my elder I'm trying to reinterpret this thinking. This interpretation is all that can happen in classical music. I'll never use a Shuddha Gandhar in Barwa or bring a new phrase into it. It is only our management of space and our placement of emphasis that can create variety in a given rhythm-cycle [Music].

This is the Agra Gharana idiom! [Music]. Now, in the Agra Gharana, what I have done in order to understand the Agra Gharana is to think of it as a Qawwali sung in Khali-Bhari, Qawwali-style repetition I've heard a lot of Qawwals in my childhood, In Gowalia Tank, Tejpal

Hall (Mumbai) Such as Yusuf Azad, 'Real' Yusuf Azad Shakeela Bano Bhopali Jani Brothers and I also heard private baithaks (concerts) given by them they would indulge in this kind of creative repetition. And they would find many mukhadas in the bandish apart from the basic mukhada, and they would thus make repetition possible and easy.

In traditional terminology, this is called 'mukhada-bandi'. This has almost become extinct now hardly anyone does it anymore for example: [Music] this is a different kind of voice take this mukhada for example [Music] now this phrase (janam ki bairan) becomes the mukhada [Music] see we already have three different mukhadas here [Music].

This was the Agra Gharana as I have understood and assimilated it because I had a very non-typical journey as compared to most singers: I listened to and documented other musicians for 10 years. I was in indore 2 years ago and on many auto-rikshaws, I saw this written: 'one listened when the other spoke' 'Bapu called them both wise blokes' don't know why they brought Bapuji into this! they might have watched the Munnabhai film but I listened! How did I 'listen' to them? Through electronic media. Young singers today have so many options available that you can, like an actor, enter into various musical roles. I have not received training in the Agra Gharana but I have received exposure to it I have listened to it as a child, my father exposed me to it and I had a fondness for listening. Not let's see how this same traditional value of madhyalay is interpreted by the Bhindibazar Gharana [Music].

This is Ustad Amir Khan's approach this is the germ, the seed from which he developed his sargam this is what he took from Aman Ali Khan (of the Bhindibazar Gharana) in my analysis [Music].

Now, what happens here is as said in Sanskrit, this is 'pad - lalitya' - the lilt of poetic metre in the bhindibazar gharana, there is a syllable on or near every beat of the taal this is different from the rhythm work of the Agra Gharana and the other person who did this was Pt. Ratanjankar because he was influenced by the bandish-ki-thumri of Lucknow even though he tried to avoid it but it couldn't be avoided because the Kathak dancer needs an accent on every beat this is like breathing for them it is their drone so what Pt. SN Ratanjankar (of the Agra Gharana) did was [Music] these are all 'tatkaars' of Kathak [Music].

This is another way of approaching the madhyalay of the Kathak dancers [Music] but there is a fault in this bandish it starts from the second beat of the tala this takes us back towards precomposed music because there is no space here to improvise. You are forced to only sing the bandish. You could repeat the first line with variations but it will always start from the same point there is no space to create so as a solution to this problem Ustad Khadim Hussain composed another bandish which has a strong arrival at the sam [Music].

Look at how much thought has gone into this bandish the metre of teental, its beats, rhyming lines very few bandishes contain the kind of poetic thought that went into Khadim Hussain and Babanrao Haldankar's compositions. So, this is how, while keeping traditional values alive, their interpretation can differ.

The madhyalay lilt you were taking about the Agra Gharana implements it through word-play but not the Bhindibazar Gharana there, it is realised through the use of sargam and in the sargam, one does not have to worry about long and short vowels for someone like me who enjoys language [Music] this sounds wrong because you can't extend a short vowel [Music] doesn't this sound wrong? I'm mindful of this in my own bol-taan too because the classical musicians is

allowed to extend the long vowel as much as they like they've allowed themselves to do it! for their gayaki.

Let me share an anecdote about the Kirana Gharana about raga Todi. My father, he must have been 25 at the time, he visited Abdul Kareem Khansaheb as secretary of the Bombay music circle to invite Khansaheb to sing at the circle. Khansaheb sang to about 100 audience members and Khansaheb started singing raga Todi Abdul Kareem Khansaheb's tempos were not as slow as Amir Khansaheb [Music].

In this way, Khansaheb spent 15-20 minutes on the rishabh and the Shadaj as my father would describe that concert [Music]. Khansaheb is in search of the gandhar 'if this is the rishabh I'm finding today, then should this be the shruti of my gandhar?' because these shrutis are interdependent they don't have fixed positions [Music]. Now look at this [Music] touching the madhyam changes the position of the gandhar! [Music].

So, Khansaheb spends another 15-20 minutes here, and then... [Music] (moves to the madhyam) (and then spends time on the pancham) [Music]. In this way, by the time Khansaheb reached the upper Sa, an hour and a half had passed! the audience had tears in their eyes such was the atmosphere created and the canteen manager brought out his coffee and snacks and demanded an interval! Because he had to leave. So, they interrupted Khansaheb for the interval but no one in the audience got up! and then when Khansaheb resumed singing, he continued with the same raga!

Now, that singing had no complicated structures, or anything like that this was the effect of his voice and his tunefulness. In that era, there were no other distractions or means of entertainment so this is a traditional value, a commitment to beauty descending into the depths of sur. But into

the structural simplicity of this Kirana Gharana, Amir Khan brought the complexity of combinations which he got from the Bhendibazar gharana. In Maharashtra, the Sawai Gandharva branch of Kirana doesn't have the kind of complexity you find in Abdul Haq's disciples like Roshan Ara Begum, Faiyaz-Niyaz Ahmed, Abdul Wahid Khan Amir Khan was influenced by Abdul Wahid Khan and Bhendibazar and taans from Rajab Ali Khan.

You always describe kirana's innocent design...Yes, Kirana singers search for true swaras from within innocent, simple design. But this search makes the music great because 'innocence' and 'simplicity' are relative terms. Now, this is step-by-step linear development. And the Maharashtrian Sawai Gandharva branch of Kirana.

And the Maharashtrian Sawai Gandharva branch of Kirana only sang ragas to which this was suitable they would never sing ragas like Barwa or Chhayanaat. In ragas Malkauns and Todi, you can't really go 'wrong' however much you lengthen a particular note they chose such ragas because that was their approach now in comparison to this, look at the 'comprehensive' approach of Gwalior which is known as the first gharana.

Now the step-by-step linear development of the Kirana Gharana that we were talking about this Gwalior bandish is the opposite approach. It's starting mukhada alone covers one and a half octaves. This is in Jhoomra taal [Music].

So what is happening here is the discipline of sequential singing has not been enforced here it is a free gaayaki because these singers did not have a responsibility to entertain a mass audience. The Gwalior gunijan-khanahad the largest number of great musicians because when the British defeated Wajid Ali Shah in Lucknow the musicians, smart as they were, ran away to Gwalior, and when they asked Wajid Ali Shah to escape the person who ties his shoe-laces had run away

too! he had to wear his shoes himself which he wasn't used to! He started dancing as soon as he stood up as was his habit! so he was caught and deported to Rangoon!

Now, the Gwalior gunijan-khana was such that the Maharaja would even send food from the palace to musicians at lunch time which is why musicians settled there so they were singing for each other! 'if you sing meends, I'll sing boltan; if you sing those, I'll sing ghaseet'. This was like Delhi's Red Fort, where the poetry scaled heights because the poets interacted with each other instead of trying to please the masses. This is what happened in Gwalior!

Now look at the comprehensiveness of Gwalior. But what happened later was that it seemed to have all aspects of music, but nothing was specific / well-defined "we do everything" they said, and it was true! What anga of music exists in Jaipur that is not there in Gwalior? As long as there is someone who can do justice to it. But one has to be specific at some point! For instance, like I demonstrated in todi; if a Gwalior musician were to sing Bihag. [Music] This is an old approach it is quite difficult to sing this in tune [Music] (demonstrates Gwalior's 'comprehensive' approach).

So, from the beginning of the performance to the end. Gwalior musicians move through all three octaves. If you listen to old recordings of Krishnarao Shankar Pandit... In other musicians you can tell whether they are beginning the performance or are in the middle or ending it but not Krishnarao Pandit! because from the beginning, he covers so much ground! all the octaves, you never know where he'll go!

This is a valid approach! singers use a fixed sequence of angas only to simplify music for the masses do great writers like GA Kulkarni or O Henry write their stories using a fixed sequence? Aren't there twists in any given storyline? Gwalior's comprehensiveness is such that they have

sung in every taal and every tempo with so many bandishes. Now my gurus have told me about Alladiya Khansaheb of the Jaipur Gharana that he spoils his voice because some Maharaja make him sing too much all the time [Music](demonstrated Gwalior style of singing)

Alladiya Khan lost this ability, and made a new style (demonstrates same raga in Alladiya-Jaipur style) this brought specificity to the music unlike Gwalior, which had all angas, but less specificity when there is an excess of anything artists go to the other extreme. Agra gharana emphasised wordplay so much that Amir Khan went to the other extreme and avoided it and listeners found a certain peacefulness there but if you listen to Amir Khan's recordings for a week you'll run towards Agra gayaki again this happens whenever there is an excess of anything and bol-banav (word-play) is not easy!

So this is the music Jaipur Gharana created incredibly beautiful structure and developed their taan (demonstrates Jaipur style) (lyrics of Jaipur bandish in Raag Savani-Kalyan) so the Jaipur gharana places each note in a specific way. Not ambiguously like in Gwalior. But even ambiguity has a role to play! sometimes, when the artist is not definite it allow you to imagine sometimes you get tired of this and want something definite Amir Khan gives you options Jaipur Gharana or Kumar Gandharva don't!

The attitude there is almost impudent: "Listen to what I'm doing. This phrase must be exactly like this" but sometimes this attitude makes it difficult for you to imagine something else because Kumarji sings it so effectively and tunefully that you think this is the only way to sing this bandish it becomes difficult to imagine it differently so this is what Jaipur did: elaboration in aakaar and then their taan. There was no bol-banav initially and bol-banav is difficult! you need to know the language to do it so this was a bird's eye view of four gharanas.

So, what you said about the Jaipur Gharana they way they differentiated themselves from Gwalior was through specificity and taan but please also tell us about their use of teental and picking up the mukhada from a fixed point. The thing about Tilwada the taal commonly used in Gwalior. (demonstrates the theka of Tilwada) [Music] it doesn't give you a strong sense of arrival at the sam as compared to teental so Alladiya Khan stopped Tilwada and used teental instead.

And his tempo is a slowed down Madhyalay (demonstrates typical Jaipur tempo). Now if I have truly understood the Jaipur principle then here's what I can do. This is a bandish that Kumar Gandharva composed for himself, to demonstrate this understanding of Jaipur instead of singing typical Jaipur bandishes. One doesn't become a Jaipur singer just by singing Jaipur bandishes! You're more likely to become Udaipur! (demonstrates Kumar Gandharva's Jaipur-style bandish) [Music]. I'm making Kumarji's bandish more complex! by emphasizing fractions of the beat I'm not murdering (ghaat) it's the dhun but my accents (aaghaat) are new! [Music].

So, this is the Jaipur principle but I'm not singing a Jaipur bandish! So I think what you're saying is that if you want to present the Gayaki of a gharana, You may sing bandishes of that Gharana or any other bandish but the principle should be there. This is a lilt! It isn't easy to sing with this lilt for even 5 minutes! Now Kumarji is known to have imbibed the essences of all the gharanas as he encountered them and he imparted this perspective to us too of appreciating traditional musical values he didn't impose the values he favoured upon his disciples like me and Mukul Shivaputra he had no desire to start a Gharana "understand my approach", he would say similarly, Gajananbuwa Joshi also assimilated the values of Agra, Jaipur and Gwalior Gharanas Amir Khan also took the complex Kirana style of Abdul Wahid Khan. Rajab Ali Khan's

Jaipur-Gwalior-Beenkari compound. And Aman Ali (Bhendibazar Gharana) and made his own bouquet of these three Musicians of old this.

And now there is so much diversity we have access to! Once a great Marathi theatre personality listened to these demonstrations I was giving she found it all wonderful “no one can do it better than you” she told me, “but what about your own musical identity?” I said, “but as an actor, you are proud of your ability to play various roles” “why should I restrict myself to a single attitude?” “I can also enter various roles like you do!” [Music] after traversing so much Gwalior terrain... (demonstrates Ghazal as example of entering a different musical role). I can enter this role too I am old now – all of you can enter various roles! and you can come back out of them too!

