

# Media and Conservation of Art: With Special Reference to the Dying Legacy of Indore Gharana

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## Abstract

Indian classical music has its roots deeply embedded in the Gharana Culture. One such prominent gharana that stamped its authority through the stalwarts like Ustad Amir Khan Sahab was Indore Gharana. The gharana once reached the zenith of popularity with the singing style and the beautiful compositions amongst the listeners of all age. The unique aspect of this singing style was that it was aesthetically beautiful and easily adaptable and that made it a popular style amongst everyone. The gharana is however currently going through a dark phase and is at the brink of getting extinct. The gharana is today nothing more than a dying legacy. It is unfortunate to note that a tradition worth centuries is at the brink of death. The study therefore revolves around the factors that led to the downfall of this rich legacy. This study is relevant for mapping the causes that can probably lead to the downfall of other prominent gharana as well. The primary data is collected through interviews of the current Indore Gharana artists. The findings suggest that the lack of interest of academia and popular musicians and industry has been one of the cause of the downfall of this tradition. Lack of a popular figure within the gharana of the stature of Ustad Amir Khan Sahab also contributed to the fall of the gharana.

## INTRODUCTION

India's musical history is a mix of plenty of factors which include economic, social and cultural facets. These factors led to a lot of changes, but there were still certain things which still needed to change with the time. The tradition of classical music maintained its essence to a great extent. The credit for this goes to the extraordinary artists such as Sharangdev and Matang. Bharat Muni, Sadarang-Adarang, and hundreds of artists of all the times who kept the centuries-long tradition alive through their hard work. These great musicians kept the age-old tradition alive through Guru-Shishya Parampara. In Sangeet Ratnakar, there is a use of the term Sampradayawhich means musicians.

Hindustani Classical music is mostly based on the Gharana system. The word Gharana originated from the word 'Ghar', which literally means home. Gharana can be said to be a group of people who follow a certain belief system or a certain singing style in the context of classical music. The Gharana system has still been kept alive through the guidance provided by various Gurus and Ustaad. The Gharana system played a significant part in the establishment

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of different musical traditions. The history of Hindustani classical music is actually the history of various musical Gharanas that existed at different times throughout the history. Gharanas have been named differently in different regions/musical forms. In the south, it was known as Sampradaya, such as Shivmat, Bharatmat, etc. In Dhrupad, it is known as Vaani, such as DagurVaani, Nauhar Vaani, etc. Furthermore, with the birth of Khayal, the word Gharana started being used. Neumann, in his work, states that "some musicians give the impression that 'Gharanas' are very ancient. However, in reality, the concept of Gharana dates back to the end of the 19th century. Though its lineage with 'Sampradaya' and 'Vaani' cannot be neglected".

The Gharana system has a lot of positive effects as well as adverse effects on Indian Classical Music. According to Dr. Krishan Rao Pandit, "A tradition of centuries, the intellect of Gurus, and generations of Guru-Shishya Parampara, all of these together make a Gharana". As mentioned above, Gharana stands for a community of performers who share a distinctive musical style that traces to a particular Guru or region. This musical style has not only the uniqueness of performance but also a broader ideology of music, aesthetics, and pedagogy. This style must be passed down through three generations before it, and its practitioner may be considered a Gharana. A Gharana generally is started by a talented and creative individual who has created and developed a novel presentation for the Raga and has further propagated the teaching to his disciples, and when this process keeps going on for at least three generations, gharana is formed"

What makes Gharana unique is the style of singing. Gharanas are primarily about the demonstration of a unique style of presenting the music. It can be in the form of vocals or instrumental music. Mukherjee claims that for a Gharana to exist, it needs to fulfil four conditions.

- There should be continuity in terms of several consistent generations carrying the legacy forward.
- There should be a geographical reference to it.
- The style of music should be unique and distinct, separating it from the other styles or Gharanas.

- The artists of the Gharana should contribute to the legacy of the tradition by adding something valuable to it.

It is believed that the foundation of the Gharana system stemmed out of the Tansen's family, which included the family of his son and his daughter. Ever since, there have been a lot of Gharanas which emerged throughout the time, but there are only a few Gharana which are followed often in different music styles of Indian Classical Music. In Khayal, these are-

- Gwalior Gharana
- Dilli Gharana
- Jaipur Gharana
- Agra Gharana
- Kirana Gharana
- Indore Gharana
- Rampur Sahaswan Gharana
- Patiala Gharana

## Indore Gharana

The tradition of Indore Gharana is believed to be originated by Ustaaad Amir Khan. It can be said that this Gharana has branched out from Bhendi Bazaar Gharana. Ustad Shahmir Khan, the father of Ustaaad Amir Khan, was a Sarangi and Veena player of Bhendi Bazaar Gharana. He served at the court of the Holkars of Indore. Ustaaad Shahmir Khan was an excellent Sarangi player, and his initial music training was done under Bhendi Bazaar Gharana. Ustad Shahmir Khan's father passed away when he was fifteen years old. Hence he grew up under the care of his maternal uncle, who was a Sarangi player in a court. There he started getting training to play the Sitar, but he also got the vocal training up to the age of 15 years (till the time of his father's demise). Hence, he learnt the nuances of Sarangi very quickly. He also got vocal training from Nazeer Khan and Chajju Khan. He learnt the Merukhand technique from them and came to Indore. He had a purely musical environment at his home. Hence, Ustad Amir Khan grew up in a musical environment. He received his initial training in Sarangi playing through his father. Nevertheless, he had a great interest in Khayal Gayaki. Keeping his deep interest in mind, Ustaaad Shahmir Khan started Ustad Amir Khan's vocal training around the age of 13-14 years.



He mainly used to focus on Merukhand techniques during his training. Ustaad Shahmir Khan, being a Sarangi player, was a very well-reputed among the artists of different Gharanas. He used to conduct Baithaks/Mehfils weekly where all the renowned and esteemed artists such as Babu Khan, Bundu Khan, Maglu Khan [Bin player], Wahid Khan, Rajab Ali Khan, Aman Ali Khan, Jahangir Khan [Tabla player], Munnu Khan, Latif Khan, etc used to visit and perform. The motive behind conducting these Baithak was to train Ustaad Amir Khan. Moreover, this opened a vast scope of possibilities in music for Ustad Amir Khan.

During these Baithaks, he heard a lot of artists and got influenced by the singing style of Ustad

Abdul Waheed Khan, Ustad Rajab Ali Khan, and Ustad Aman Ali Khan out of everyone.

Ustaad Amir Khan started performing at a very early age. His singing style was mainly Merukhandi. But it was also purely influenced by these three artists. Ustad Rajab Ali Khan was well known for his difficult Drut Taans and Bolbaants, which could be easily seen in Ustaad Amir Khan's singing style. Ustad Abdul Wahid Khan of Kirana Gharana used to sing Vilambit Khayal in Jhoomra Taal. Ustaad Amir Khan was influenced by it and incorporated his own singing as well. He was also influenced by the traditional compositions sung by Ustad Abdul Wahid Khan. He incorporated all these techniques in his singing style and sang it under the name of Indore Gharana. Hence, this unique style of Indore Gharana blends the spiritual flavour and nuances of Dhrupad with the vividness of Khayal. He used to present detailed Badhat (progression) in Ati-Vilambit Laya (very slow tempo) followed by sargams, taans and bol-taans, including Merukhandi patterns, and finally a Madhya Laya or Drut Laya (medium or fast tempo) Chhota Khayal or a Rubaidaar Tarana.

Although this Gharana did not fulfil the criteria of three generations, but the singing style of this Gharana was so different from other Gharanas that it could not be put in any of the existing Gharanas. Hence, this singing style was considered as a whole new and different Gharana altogether by all the acclaimed and knowledgeable artists. Some people also like to call it 'The Amir Khan Gharana', but Ustaad Amir Khan did not approve of it, stating that 'A Gharana can never be named after a person. It is

always named after a place. Indore has long been home to distinguished musicians who have left their mark in the field. I listened to them and picked up whatever I found particularly well. So, I think this Gayaki is of the 'Indore Gharana'.

## Journey from First to Third Generation

As mentioned above, this Gharana was founded by Ustaad Amir Khan, which makes him the first generation of this Gharana. He can be credited for his contributions in popularizing the singing style of this Gharana. He used to perform in concerts in India as well as in other countries. He also gave his voice for various film songs such as Bajju Bawra, Jhanak Jhanak Payal Baaje, etc. He was also the esteemed artist of All India Radio. He not just popularized this singing style through his performances at various stages and media like All India Radio and Doordarshan, but he also passed on his knowledge and tradition to many of his students. A few of them were Shreekant Bakre, Gajendra Bakshi, Poorvi Mukherjee, Pradyumn Mukherjee, Tejpal Singh & Surinder Singh, Ajit Singh Paintal, Kankana Banerjee, Bhimsen Sharma, Mahendra Toke, Pandit Amarnath, Rasiklal Andheriya, Muneer Khan, etc. All these artists can be considered as the second generation of this Gharana. They contributed in popularizing the singing style of this Gharana by performing in various fields of music. On the one hand, artists like Singh Bandhu, Kankana Banerjee, and Poorvi Mukherjee contributed by performing this style on various stages and media such as All India Radio, whereas on the other hand, artists like Pandit Amarnath did not limit themselves to just Khayal Gayaki. They experimented with classical music in Indian Cinema as well, where they created and composed a lot of compositions keeping the singing style of this Gharana in their mind. These artists also passed on this tradition to successive generations, which is the third generation of this Gharana,

through their students. Few among these students were Shanti Sharma, Bindu Chawla, Baldev Raj Verma, Aditi Som, Vaidehi Dwivedi, etc. These artists contributed their best in popularizing their singing tradition through various stages and platforms. However, unfortunately, this generation did not get much success in expanding and

popularizing this tradition further. Very few people know about these artists in the present times. Undoubtedly, they have created a lot of academic scholars, but there are very few artists left who are performing this singing style in present times.

## Role of Media in Conservation of Indore Gharana

Media has always played the role of a carrier that has been transporting history, knowledge and art across centuries. Indore Gharana is no exception to it. While many artists of the Gharana themselves credit media for keeping their tradition alive, it would be important to get into the details of the 'how' related to it. The rise of the media kept the Gharana tradition into limelight even when very few people were making it big from within the Gharana. While a specific group of thought has been hell-bent on disregarding Indore Gharana as a Gharana for the reason that it doesn't fulfill all the criterions required to call something a Gharana, media kept on addressing it as a Gharana on all possible platforms. Not just that, the media kept the names of the legends of the Gharana alive on popular platforms like *Idea Jalsa* and popular reality singing shows like *Sa Re Ga Ma Pa* and *Indian Idol*. Before this, AIR and Doordarshan had provided voice to the classical artists via a broadcasting platform to make these arts reach millions of people in the blink of an eye. This kept people aware of the fact that Indore Gharana exists and has been blessed with various artists of highest stature. Media is known to be working in a specific sequence which begins with aware, inform, impart knowledge, create desire and incite action. Here the role of awareness, information and imparting knowledge was more than sufficient to keep the tradition of Gharana alive.

## CONCLUSION

Keeping the journey of this Gharana in mind from the very first generation, we can say that this singing style was loved and appreciated by a lot of connoisseurs of music. Not only did people with musical backgrounds enjoy the Gayaki of this Gharana, but the people with low knowledge of music also enjoyed this singing style. The very first generation of this tradition, Ustad Amir Khan

himself, set a record by providing the popularity to a very new singing style in the musical world. There was uniqueness in his singing style, but apart from that, the communication & print media helped a lot in spreading the voice and words in favour of this Gharana. He regularly used to perform through various platforms, and it would also be covered in various news and magazines as articles. However, as the generations passed, we can notice the deterioration in the popularity of this Gharana. The broadcasting of this singing style got limited, and it slowly vanished from the print media as well. Not to mention, the books mentioning this Gharana are very limited in numbers as well. Hence the awareness in regards to this tradition faded away slowly. If we talk to anyone about Indore Gharana in present times, they would just know about Ustad Amir Khan or a very limited number of other artists of this tradition. The speed from which this Gharana got its popularity, with way same speed it is dying right now due to the lack of proper publicity/propaganda.

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