

Critical Study of the Elements of Style Formation in Indian Music

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Abstract

When an outstanding artist creates a new and attractive style and gets a sufficient number of followers, that style becomes a Gharana after some time. But apart from this we also see many artists whose art presentation is out of the box. This article has been written on the subject of how such different personal styles would have been created. Though Gharana is a group of artists following a similar musical ideology, not every artist in the Gharana has an identical presentation style. Quite often, the presentation style of a student differs from the Guru, and on a few occasions, two students of the same Guru also present a different Shaili i.e., style. Subsequently, these changes assimilate into the original style, and the next generation of students carry this new style forward. The Gharanas on Indian music is no exception to this phenomenon.



Keywords: Style, Shaili, Gharanas, Khyal, Variations, Principles of style, Raga presentation

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Preamble: Keshavrao Bhole has said, "Bakhlebuwa's and Vazebuwa's example indicates that some artists learn the techniques of other *Gharanas* and seek innovation in their presentation. The objective is to ensure that multiple dimensions have been included in their style, not relying only on the traditional approach. A few generous *Gurus* encouraged their students to learn other *Gharana* techniques and recommended them to the concerned *Gurus*." [1] However, incorporating a different *Gharana* style is one of the ways an existing *Gharana* experiences change in its presentation. Some talented artists changed the traditional approach through imagination and creativity, and a few invited criticisms from their contemporaries and purists. However, these changes became a part of the new *shaili* and enriched the existing style. On a few occasions, able and talented students carried forward these changes, eclipsing the preexisting *Gharana* style.

"*Gharana* is a societal phenomenon, and its roots lie in societal acceptance. *Gharanas* experience change as per the change in preferences of society. Societal acceptance is an evolving concept, and the creation of music begins as a rebellion against the then-existing societal acceptance. However, as time progresses, this rebellion eventually finds acceptance and later, it becomes an integral part of the tradition." A study of *Gharanas* also points out a few social differences contributing to the development and changes in *Gharanas*. [2]

1) Style of music and its principles: *Shaili* or the Style enables the *Gharana* to exist and sustain itself. As we examine the changing style of *Gharanas*, it is essential to understand the concept of *shaili*. Stylistics enables us to understand different styles in literature, and while we could associate it with grammar, we could associate its musical counterpart with technique. After studying the definitions of style by various thinkers, we could comprehend it from the point of view of Art as:

"Style is the expression of art through a medium, principle and structure, which involves a specific point of view, an aesthetic vision and artistic creativity." However, as an artist's persona is also a part of the style, it is the expression of an artist's persona through a medium, principle and structure."

However, there is a minute difference between a *shaili* (Style) and *Gharana*. While *Shaili* reflects an individualist approach, *Gharana*, on the other hand, appears organised and profound. Students molded in similar *Gharana* traditions possess different vocal features, presentations and interests. Hence, every individual artist retains a style which is different from the other. A particular *shaili* within a *Gharana* could attract more students and gain more popularity. It could also result in a change in the overall presentation of the *Gharana*.

2) Principles and structure of musical styles: After examining the definition of style and its relation to music, we will discuss its principles and design. Stylists have mentioned the elements of literature styles that also apply to musical styles as follows:

a) Deviation: We could term Deviation as presenting features that are different from conventional practices. Bholanath Tiwari says, "Following a new path instead of daily rules and conventions is deviation." The styles developed by Alladiya Khan, Abdul Karim Khan, and Kumar Gandharva could be included in this category.

b) Selection: Selection involves choosing an object from a given set. For example, Prabha Atre chose *Sargam* from Aamir Khan's *ativilambit gayaki* and incorporated it into her *gayaki*. Similarly, Bhimsen Joshi's selection of a few elements from Balgandharva's *gayaki* and Kumar Gandharva choosing a few of them from Omkarnath Thakur's *gayaki* are other examples.

c) Parallelism: This element involves a parallel use of similar or opposite musical principles in a presentation. "For example, Aamir Khansaheb used Wahid Khan's (*Kirana Gharana*) *Alaap* and Amaan Ali Khan's (*Bhendibazaar Gharana*) *taans* and *Sargam* in his presentation. A similar musical principle, in this case, is the use of *swaras*. On the other hand, Manik Verma included

two opposite musical principles – *laya* (*Agra Gharana*) and *swar* (*Kirana Gharana*) – in her style.

d) Indirect statement: This style reflects a statement not directly presented by the performer. Which principle could fall in this category apart from *swar*, *laya* and syllable? Maharishi Bharat has termed it as *Kaku* or voice modulations.

Bholanath Tiwari says,

"Pronunciation depicts strictness, softness, transparency, musicality, non-musicality, peace, fluctuation, density, speed, slowness and a range of such feelings." In music, every artist has unique pronunciation, which contributes to the difference in the presentation style. Many artists use the technique of voice modulation to portray a unique emotion in their presentation. [3]

The elements mentioned above contribute to the changes in the *Gharana* style. Some artists incorporate changes in the *Gharana* style without altering its fundamental structure. These changes are compatible or complementary to the original style.

There are a few other factors that contribute to these changes.

3) Imagination is the primary reason behind the creation of styles and their associated changes.

3. A) Imagination and creation in an artist's creative process:

Three factors are important when we discuss the concept of imagination in the music world.

1. Art
2. Artist
3. Listeners

An artist seeks beauty in art through the medium of imagination. The listeners and the artist experience various emotions and expressions through this beauty. When presenting a Raag, an artist offers a range of emotions through the process of improvisation. Experienced artists enable listeners to experience peace and joy, and the power of their imagination enables this experience. However, listeners also possess an independent vision; hence, every listener's experience is different. For artists, imagination and creativity depend on their practice and their ability. "The power of imagination depends on a musician's merit, practice, and brain ability." [4]

However, imagination for listeners is often a result of prior experience. Here too, personal ability plays a part. Imagination results in creativity by rebuilding previous experience and practice, and it also depends on individual ability and training.

Music isn't a static art form. It influences the listeners every moment, making them intimately related to every stage of the presentation.

The manifestation of art is a product of an artist's intuition and the response of the listeners. Perhaps, this is why many listeners are inclined toward familiar compositions, voices, and the style of expression. As far as the *Kirana Gharana* is concerned, Bhimsen Joshi's style has influenced the newer generation of artists. Bhimsen's voice, style and presentations are familiar

among the listeners, and perhaps, following them enables a quicker interaction with the listeners. Attempts to establish such an interaction play a vital role in creating new compositions, omitting a few others and eventually creating a unique performance style.

Students and followers of the style also play a crucial role in its sustenance and influence on successive generations. Apart from its founder's brilliant imagination and creative abilities, a *Gharana* also needs the continuous presence of followers for its journey ahead.

The media and advancements in technology have enabled easy access to music. Students can listen to various *Gharanas'* styles; hence, artists who insist on purity of style are rare. Many artists compose new *bandishes* and create new *raag*. More unknown elements are incorporated into the traditional *Gharana* flow.

Ulhas Kashalkar shares his thoughts about the changes experienced by *Gharanas*. He says, "While *gharanas* are designed to ensure a degree of continuity, they are certainly not resistant to change. In the last twenty-five years, musicians from all major *gharanas* have broken the shackles and have enlarged the aesthetic scope of their music. In other words, the several limitations of each *gayaki* were overcome." [5]

The *degree of continuity* is critical as it indicates certain inherent factors within *Gharanas* that ensure the style's progression.

He further says,

"For instance, Agra *gayaki* underwent some changes owing to musicians like Jagannathbuwa Purohit and, after him, Sharafat and Yunnus Hussain. Contemporary Jaipur *gayaki*, too, is different from the Jaipur *gayaki* of Kesarbai Kerkar and Laxmibai Jadhav. Gwalior, to saw a change with the overall tempo of the music getting slowed down. Even trail-blazing innovators like KishoriAmonkar and Kumar Gandharva have emerged from thoroughbred *gharana* training." [6]

In his book *GharandajGayaki*, Wamanrao Deshpande has pointed out that "*Gharanas* sustain themselves through a balance between tradition and innovation. The ones which do not experience this balance result in stagnation." [7]

Every *Gharana* is changing by incorporating newer styles into its traditional structure. Let us examine these changes in detail.

4) An analysis of changes in the *Gharana* system:

Let us examine the reason for changes in the *Gharana* system and relate them to our study of the Kirana *Gharana*. There are three prominent reasons for the change:

- a) The innate nature of the artist.
- b) Influence of contemporary artists.
- c) The existing social realities and expectations.

Let us examine the style of Ustad Abdul Karim Khan. He is considered the originator of the Kirana Gharana. However, even his *gayaki* experienced change, which became different from his contemporaries. Khansaheb received similar training in Dhrupad and Khyaal as his contemporaries.[8] Still, his life experiences could have influenced his music, possibly making him an introvert and manifesting in a style marked by pathos and peace. But this was also due to his innate nature. Additionally, Khansaheb was influenced by Rahimat Khansaheb and Carnatic music - which led him to incorporate *Sargam* in his singing style. [9]

Khansaheb ensured that listeners became an integral part of his performance. (He even printed the text of the *Bandish* and distributed them among the listeners before his concert.) He treated every form of music respectfully and was keen to ensure that his *gayaki* remained expressive. He assured listeners experienced aesthetic beauty and an outpour of emotions from his *gayaki*. [10]

One path-breaking change Abdul Karim Khan introduced was incorporating ordinary listeners in his concert performances. On the other hand, Wahid Khan displayed mastery and patience through improvisation in an *ativilambit laya* and simultaneously entertained listeners by showing multiple facets of a *swar*. Both trained many students and thus the *gayaki* continued in the subsequent generations. However, artists from successive generations incorporated their innovations and experiments and further expanded this style. The same phenomenon happened in different gharanas and brought different colors to the beauty of Indian classical music presentation.

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