

RABINDRA BHARATI UNIVERSITY
VOCAL MUSIC DEPARTMENT

COURSE - M.A. (Compulsory Course) (CBCS) 2020
Semester - 4.1; Group - A. English Version.
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Gharanas of Hindustani Music

1. Seni Gharana

Seni Gharana was originated from the lineage of the legendary Dhrupad Mastero Ustad Tansen. He was born sometimes inbetween 1510-1520 A.D. He had four sons – Tarangsen, Suratsen, Saratsen, and Vilas Khan. But no information of his daughter has been documented by Abul Fazal or Fakirullah in their historical cronicles.

During the reigm of Aurangzeb, we come to know some stories about Saraswati devi as the daughter of Tansen. Misri sing, Samsingh, Naubat Khan – these three names were found in those stories as the son-in-law of Tansen. But these stories bears no strong historical authentication. In some texts of that time, the name Misri Singh was found as the disciple of Vilas Khan, the son of Tansen. The descendents and disciples of Misri Singh extended the glory of Seni Gharana in laterdays. This extension has been honoured by the musical historians.

Being the son of Tansen, Vilas Khan was the actual founder of Seni Gharana. But the main credit goes to Sudhar Khan and Rajas Khan , the sons of grand daughter of Vilas Khan. Both of them were court singers of Sultan aurangzeb. By an order, Aurangzeb banned music in his rule and all the musicians were forced to stay at home with a monthly pension. These musicians practiced at home and also taught their disciples there. As a result of this the concept of Gharana got established.

Masit Khan, the son of rajas Khan, was the first music-mastero of this gharana who brought fame by introducing a new slow tempo dhrupad style of instrumental piece called 'Masitkhani gat'. His disciple Reza Khan, introduced a middle tempo instrumental piece known as 'Rezakhani gat'. Gulab Khan , the grand son of Sudhar Khan was a good dhrupad singer. Gulab Khan had three sons. Of them the eldest one Charju Khan was a Rabab player. The other two sons were expert dhrupad singers. Charju Khan had three sons – Zafar Khan, Pyar Khan and Waasat Khan. These three brothers were famous Dhrupad singers and were known as 'Triratna'. They had received their music lessons from their father and were court singers of Lucknow later. After disunionation of Lucknow court, Waasat Khan came to Kolkata at Metiaburz-court of Nawab Wazed Ali Shah. At that time, The zamindar of Pathuriaghata, Harakumar Thakur adopted his discipleship.

Bhadur Khan, the third son of the younger brother of Charju Khan, had been invited by Raja Raghunath Singh II of Vishnupur in Bankura district of Westbengal. There Gadadhar Chakraborty, an interested musician became his disciple and learnt different musical techniques of seni gharana. Later Ramsankar Bhattacharjee, the disciple of Gadadhar Chakraborty founded the stepping stone of Vishnupur Gharana.

Niyamat Khan, the fourth generation in the later lineage of Misri Singh, became the court singer of Sultan Muhammad Shah. He was a famous Kheyal singer. Sultan honoured him with the title of 'Sadarang'. His descendants and disciples were known as Rangeele Gharana.

Thus two new gharana styles evolved from Seni Gharana.

Beside them there were many distinguished musicians in seni gharana who enriched and popularised the tradition all over India.

Some famous and distinguished maestros of this gharana are – Enayet Hoosain Khan, Sourendra Mohon Thakur, Ramsevak Mishra, Pannalal Bajpeyi, Indunath Bhattacharjee, Ali Baksh Khan, Kanhaiyalal Dheri, Girija Shankar Chakraborty, Thakur Nawab Ali Khan, Birendra Kishore Roychowdhury, Waazir Khan, Booniyad Hoosain Khan, Vishwanath Rao Dhamari, Shyam Sundar Mishra, Allauddin Khan, Hafiz Ali Khan etc.

Musical Characteristics:-

The basic frame of Seni gharana consists of different musical styles such as Dhrupad, Kheyal, Veena, Sursringar, Rabab, Esraj etc. Being originated from the gayaki style of Tansen, all the forms of seni gharana is enrooted in the direct influence of Dhrupad style.

The dhrupad singing style of Tansen was Gourhar style. His gayaki was full of calmness and is alleviated with deep application of swaras. 'Meer' was the chief alamkar along with prolong application of swaras. His song did not indulge any type of restlessness or laykari. The lyrics got the most importance in singing. There were no ingredients for public attraction.

Sadarang in his early life , played Veena as an accompanist for Dhrupad, in the court of Sultan Muhammad Shah. In the later days , when he introduced a new Kheyal style, influence of dhrupad was very prominent in it.

Not only Dhrupad or Kheyal, all the streams of music in this gharana were performed in madhya laya or madhya-vilambit laya. Sharp and complicated alamkaras are not used in this gharana. Prolonged application of swaras , meer based gayaki and baaj are the chief characteristics of this gharana. Open voice, full of solemnity and gamak are very much suitable for this gharana.

The baaj of Veena and Sursringar, both consists of dhrupad style. Maestros of this gharana practiced both the vocal and instrumental music simultaneously.