CHAPTER-IV

Ajrāḍā Gharānā’s traditional style of Tablā playing

In the second chapter we have discussed about the origin and evolution about gharānā. This chapter has concluded the traditional playing style and specialties of compositions of Ajrāḍā gharānā. On the basis of the domains of every gharānā, composition of Ajrāḍā gharānā and their specialties and traditional sequences are discussed in this chapter.

First and the foremost gharānā that was established in the history of tablā gharānā was Delhi gharānā and then Ajrāḍā gharānā was originated. The formation of Ajrāḍā brought a revolution and energy in the field of tablā playing. The field of tablā playing was unorganized, narrow, and to some extend undeveloped, but the formation of Ajrāḍā gharānā gave it a new life. The artists of Ajrāḍā gharānā accepted and began to play various chand (metre) and layakāri those were slumbered. They also tried to present all the varna those were not played in the field of tablā by arranging them in rhythmic quāyedā and started playing them in special style of Ajrāḍā gharānā. In the field of tablā playing due to the formation of Ajrāḍā gharānā, the creation of beauty and aesthetics came into existence. Essentially, Delhi gharānā is the first and foremost tablā gharānā, but Ajrāḍā gharānā has made tablā playing the most popular, elite, astonishing and exquisite.

4:1 The Beginning and Purpose of Traditional system of Tablā Playing

Since ancient times the percussion instruments are used traditionally in Indian music. All these instruments have specific specialties as well as independent usage. Since ancient times these instruments were used only for the purpose of accompanying. Several percussion instruments were used for accompanying various form of music. During those times drupad-dhamār style of singing was traditional as well as popular
and to accompany it, pakhāwaj was traditionally used. It is assumed that as time passed, with the propaganda and popularity of *khyāl gāyki*, use of tablā came into existence. This was because with soft and melodious *khyāl gāyki* use of pakhāwaj was not considered appropriate. It was confirmed that tablā was similar to pakhāwaj and so it became popular at that time. During those times tablā was used for accompanying the vocal concerts as its rhythm sound was pleasing to the ears.

As time passed new things were discovered in the percussion musical instruments. Even new Composition was composed. Along with that new methods of playing the various musical instruments were brought into practice. During this process tablā got its independent identity. After this it was developed and used for solo performances. That gave birth to a new style. Since then the solo performances of percussion instruments came into existence. Due to this originated the tradition of gharānā in the History of tablā.

Due to the determination and hard work of all the scholars various innovative compositions were composed and originated new gharānā. As soon as the gharānā were established these scholars continued developing new compositions and innovative styles of playing for solo performances. These Ustads continued to introduce new compositions. All the innovative compositions arranged by them were known by different names. With these new compositions arose a about in which definite order they should be put to the people in general. Such an intense thought process gave tablā its independent form.

Every gharānā has its unique tradition and independent style of playing. Every tradition and style has its own existence depending upon the way it is executed as well as its composed. Every gharānā has their exclusive style of presentation. At the same time it is also observed that the artists of the same gharānā had created their own identity by presenting the compositions differently. They may have variety in presenting their performances their origin is the same. Still it gets uniqueness for their order of compositions and their presentation.

In solo performance of tablā it is very important to know its aim as well as system of presentation. While doing so it is required observe the system in which it is
presented as well as the order in which the compositions are presented. This helps the performer to present his composition in defined order. If the presentation is done systematically it creates its own identity. The time of presentation of these compositions on decided place has a meaning. The artist is trying to convey something meaningful thought through his performance. The presenter has reasons for presenting a particular composition first. If a particular composition is not presented at the beginning the artist will always reason out the consequences of it. This systematic way of presenting will help the performer to remain in leading position.

Every gharānā has its own traditional methodology of presenting tablā solo playing. The expert immediately identifies the gharānā of the performer just by listening to the style in which tablā is played.

4:2 The Dimensions of the Methodic Tablā Playing System of Ajrāḍā Gharānā

The most important dimension of Ajrāḍā gharānā is its style of execution (Nikās). Some of the rules of Delhi gharānā were really very orthodox. The Ustad of Ajrāḍā gharānā broke those rules and introduced new composition, style of playing which made the presentation high speed and pleasing to the ears. At the same time all the compositions were arranged with accurate speed. In the style of playing of Delhi gharānā use of fingers like tarjani (forefinger) and madhyamā (middle finger) is done. In the style of this gharānā in both the danyā and banyā the above mentioned fingers are used. Due to this in that gharānā all the compositions can be presented only up to the madhya laya. In the style of Ajrāḍā gharānā the used of anāmikā (ring finger) is also done along with above two fingers. This gave the compositions uniqueness and made them easy to play in drut laya.

In the style of Delhi gharānā the varna na and nā both were played by giving the blow on the chānti by using tarjani (forefinger). In a situation where these two varna were to be played one after the other the presenter’s hands get tired as maximum strength was required while giving the strokes. The Ustad of Ajrāḍā gharānā changed
execution of both the alphabets - na and nā. They played nā as with tarjani (forefinger) same as Delhi gharānā but they started playing na by giving a stroke on the end part of using anāmikā (ring finger). The separation of both the alphabets made it easy to execute na and nā together.

Similarly in the word tirakiṭa use of anāmikā (ring finger) was done to play ṭa which made it easy to execute that particular varna. If we look at the scientific principles then to play rau these two things must be remembered. As to play rau maximum use of two bols dhingin and tirakiṭa is done. It is assumed that the people from Ajrāḍā might have implemented this tradition of playing rau.1 The tabla players of Ajrāḍā gharānā so expert at playing the rau of any quāyedā or relā that their presentation used to be really pleasing to the ears.

The Delhi gharānā was devoted towards the two basic principles of language i.e. clarity and purity of the language. Since then till today the tabla of Delhi gharānā is presented in madhya laya and is persistence of following the above discipline. Opposite the artist of Ajrāḍā gharānā were aware about the fact the beauty using madhya laya in their presentation. To make the presentation very pleasing and remarkable they played it with speed. To do this the artists of Ajrāḍā gharānā brought some important changes in their style. In this style any composition was played on tabla with speed but without any obstruction to the hands. To give speed to their presentation the artists of Ajrāḍā gharānā introduced some important variations in execution of dānyā and bānyā.2

In Ajrāḍā gharānā has given equal importance to the dānyā as well as bānyā. Both of these were given equally weight-age while presentation of performance. It was very important to have equanimity as well as sequence in the varna. While presenting any composition the absence of the above might have created a deadlock. This is the most important fact about style of presentation of the Ajrāḍā gharānā.

The specialty of this gharānā is to give equal importance to dānyā and bānyā in the presentation of every composition. The notations in some of the compositions are such that the stroke of dānyā and bānyā is given at the same time. Some notations in the compositions are such that they played one after the other.3
The artists of Ajrāḍā gharānā gave equal importance to dānyā (Right) as well as bānyā (Left). According to the scientific principle tarjani the forefinger of a right hand has more strength than other four fingers. Based on this principle maximum use of tarjani was done. For better result they changed the way bānyā was played in Delhi gharānā. They did best use of three fingers - tarjani along with anāmikā and madhyamā to play bānyā which resulted different from the playing style of Delhi gharānā. Opposite to this the forefinger of the left hand is very weak compared to other four fingers. Due to this when the artists of Delhi gharānā used bānyā while playing their hands used to get tired very quickly. In this style of playing splitting the bols were also very difficult.

To overcome this difficulty the artists of Ajrāḍā gharānā brought some changes in the use of fingers in such a way that there was strength in playing the varna of bānyā. At the same time the use of the fingers were divided which helped the artists to play the compositions easily in drut laya. In the style of Delhi gharānā the bānyā was played only in two ways.

To press and play the bānyā.
To keep the bānyā slightly open.

Other than this the artists of Ajrāḍā gharānā made the sound of the varna and composition rhythmic and melodious to the ears. To do their presentation so effective they not only made the use of bānyā but along with it they used ghaseet and kept the bānyā open. Ustad Habeebuddin Khan used his thumb for ghaseet to execute better sound.

The effect of tāshā is heard in the style of Ajrāḍā gharānā. While playing tāshā only one stick is used repetitively to give a stroke. In this style many times similar word like dhindhināginā is played. If this word is played in the drut laya, then they give a sound as dhinnānāgen which gives as the effect of tāshā. My guru Prof Sudhir Kumar Saxena used to say that during the procession of Tāziyā Ustad Habeebuddin Khan used to play tāshā by hanging it around his neck. He played all the compositions of tablā as if he is playing on tāshā. He comprised the baaj of tāshā and used it in the form of rau
while playing tablā. Due to this in the style of Ajrāḍā gharānā is highly influenced by tāshā.4

In the methodical playing tradition of Ajrāḍā gharānā all the compositions are precisely arranged in tishtra jāti for its independent existence. Most of the compositions of Delhi gharānā were arranged in chatushtra form. The Ajrāḍā gharānā experimented and promoted use of tishtra form in the compositions and brought novelty in the playing style. Due to this strange but new experiment and simplicity in the presenting style Ajrāḍā got recognition as Ajrāḍā gharānā.

While doing the introduction of tishtra jāti in the solo performance special care is taken about the laya. In this gharānā when any quāyedā is played for any composition a special care of laya was done while playing it on a higher speed. It is easy to play a quāyedā in dugun and chaugun in chatushtra jāti compared to tishtra jāti. Even if we see the system of notation to form one mātrā of chatushtra form, four letters are used. Use of three or six letters is done in tishtra form which dependents on laya.

In the solo performance of Ajrāḍā gharānā the artist has to do the presentation in a precise order. If his presentation of tablā is done in that particular order, it is recognized as ‘The Presentation of Ajrāḍā gharānā’. The form is as follows: In the style of this gharānā peshkār is played in the beginning. This is followed by the most important composition i.e. peshkār-quāyedā, which is not found in any other gharānā. After playing peshkār-quāyedā different forms of quāyedā, relā, rau etc. are played. In this the paltā of quāyedā are expanded similar to it the expansion of other composition is also done. After presenting the rau in the vilambheet laya complete tihā is played. Then in madhya laya compositions like tukdā, mukhdā, gat, chakradār etc. are also included. To end the performance a lamb-chaḍ (prolonged) composition is presented.

If all the compositions are played in the specific order of presentation it is considered as the style of Ajrāḍā gharānā. While playing tablā by the style of Ajrāḍā gharānā if all these prescribed specifications are followed by an artist success is definite. This statement is not at all an exaggeration.
4:3 The Method of Riyāz of Ajrāḍā Gharānā

In the field of music riyāz is considered to be the most important and essential thing. Every gharānā has its own and specific system of doing riyāz. Riyāz is the only thing to which every tablā player gives equal importance. The artists of Delhi gharānā used to do maximum practice of quāyedā. Before beginning the riyāz of any quāyedā, if it used to be big in size then it was divided into halves before playing.

The artists of Ajrāḍā gharānā followed this system of riyāz, at same time they also introduced their own method. In their method they did riyāz of every word as well as every group of word. For this they arranged a new composition which is popularly known as Ikāi. Only the players of Ajrāḍā gharānā only do its riyāz. While doing riyāz the artists of this gharānā convert any words into Ikāi. In this composition the division is done keeping in mind the tishtra form of Ajrāḍā gharānā. They have not only used tishtra jāti but also very skillfully used three-three beats. In this they have divided the mātrā as ‘three-three-two’ and ‘three-two-three’. The division of these two beats is played in the same manner in bhari as well as in khāli. Sometimes this composition is also played during the solo performance. If a quāyedā is arranged giving importance to a specific word then Ikāi is played before presenting that quāyedā. This is used as experiment while doing the presentation.\(^4\)

\textit{Ikāi of word dhāti}

\begin{verbatim}
2 a i t 2 a i t  i g n 2 a i t 2 a i t  i g n
X
2 a i t 2 a i t  i g n 2 a i t  i g n 2 a i t 2 a i t  i g n
2
T a i t t a i t i k n t a i t t a i t i k n t a i t i k n
0
2 a i t 2 a i t  i g n 2 a i t  i g n 2 a i t 2 a i t  i g n
3
\end{verbatim}
4:4 The Tradition of Ajrāḍā Gharānā’s Tablā Playing System

Every gharānā has its independent style of presentation. That gives the gharānā its own identity. In the playing style of this gharānā importance is given to baaj of tishtra jāti. Most of the compositions of this gharānā are arranged in tishtra jāti. Due to this Ajrāḍā gharānā is popularly known as ‘Ādi Laya ka Gharānā’. This chapter evaluates the sequence of presenting a solo performance of tablā as well as how it gained its popularity. The pioneers of this gharānā Ustad Kallu Khan and Meeru Khan adopted tishtra jāti for the first time. As a result this became the most important tradition of this gharānā. Most of the compositions were composed only in vilambeet laya. In the earlier times the Ustad
of this gharānā used to play quāyedā and relā then they used to improvise them into pechdār palte. Along with that Ustad Habeebuddin Khan experimented madhya laya to play them. He added gat, ṭukḍā, chakradār etc. into the compositions. This gave a new life to the compositions and they were presented with new dimensions. He had taken his training of purab baaj form Ustad Muneer Khan. Due to this baaj of madhya laya was established in this gharānā. After the Ustad of this gharānā used varieties in the existing compositions like gat, ṭukḍā, chakradār, mukhḍā, tripalli etc. which provided a foundation for this gharānā. In the earlier times Ustad used to play quāyedā and relā maximum only to dugun laya or maximum up to chaugun laya. Ustad Habeebuddin Khan did so much riyāz that his normal pace was equal to the dugun laya of other tablā players. Ustad Habeebuddin Khan brought tremendous transformation into the method of tablā playing of this gharānā. It is a live example that till today his method is traditionally followed by the performers of this generation. The followers of this generation have also accepted the style of playing. Now the tablā playing method of this gharānā is traditionally recognized.

4:5 The Sequence of Composition and their specialties in Independent Playing Method of Ajrāḍā Gharānā

The sequence of composition is discussed in this chapter. Hence in this chapter the analytical discussion about exact sequence of compositions played in Ajrāḍā gharānā will be done. While doing the same the exact order of each composition will be given in detail. It is also stated here that in the earlier times the Ustad of Ajrāḍā gharānā had presented their tablā only in quāyedā and relā. Here in this chapter we will also discuss how Ustad Habeebuddin Khan transformed the playing method as well as he presented every composition in his independent and unique method. We will also discuss about ‘how it all began?’ in the later part of this chapter.

The tablā players of today’s generation have established a historical sequence of presentation. If the performer follows this historical sequence while performing then it is considered to be a presentation of Ajrāḍā gharānā. The playing method of this gharānā
has been divided into two parts. The compositions like peshkār, peshkār-quāyedā, quāyedā, relā, rau etc. are played in vilambeet laya. The compositions like gat, mukhdā, tukā, chakradār etc. are played in madhya laya. In this chapter we will also discuss in detail about the technical explanation about the ways to present these compositions.

4:5:1 Peshkār

The basic peshkār of Ajrāḍā gharānā is of ‘Kharwā Ang’. In the earlier times the Ustad used to begin their performance only with a peshkār. The peshkār of Delhi gharānā begins with dhā, the peshkār of Ajrāḍā gharānā begins with dhi. Dhi is the most important word in Ajrāḍā gharānā. Similarly tiṭa ghidān is used in Delhi gharānā. In Ajrāḍā gharānā it is played as tit ghidān. In the earlier times the Ustad of Ajrāḍā gharānā used to play peshkār as follow:

The Traditional Peshkār of Ajrāḍā Gharānā (Kaharwā Ang)

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{i6} & \text{gn2a} & \text{5k} & \text{i6n} & \text{2aqei6.} & \text{Si6nk} & \text{2aqei6.} & \text{S2a2ait} & \text{2aqeit.} & \text{Sitnk} \\
\text{X} & & & & & & & & & \\
\text{itknta} & \text{5kitntak} & \text{eit.} & \text{Sitnk} & \text{2aqei6.} & \text{S2a2ait} & \text{2aqeit2.} & \text{Si6nk} & \text{0} & \text{3}
\end{align*}
\]

The tradition of this peshkār is similar to the form of a Kharwā taal. They used to play paltā of this peshkār and then end it with tiḥā. This peshkār was generally presented in madhya laya, which made its chalan really melodious and pleasing to the ears. After this all the quāyedā and relā were played.

As the tablā of this gharānā developed in place of this original peshkār, a new and well-known peshkār is played i.e. ‘dhikḍa dhin dhā dhā dhin tā’ which is played by all the tablā players of recent times. The artists of this gharānā play paltā of peshkār really well. They play and expand each word of a paltā so precisely which sounds very pleasing to ears. After that they play some choot in place of khāli and form 13th beat they begin the peshkār -quāyedā.
Ustad Habeebuddin Khan always presented a peshkār in his solo performance that he had learnt from Ustad Munir Khan. This remained as a fact only till he was not honored as khalifā. Once among the tabla performers came up one question ‘who will be honored as khalifā of Ajrāḍā gharānā?’ Here the researcher wants to express some information taken from Prof. Sudhir kumar Saxena that – Once Ustad Habeebuddin Khan was told by many tabla players to sit in front of them. Then he was told that if you really want to be honored as khalifā then you will have to present the peshkār which you have learnt from your wālid (father). Keeping in mind their respect and on the request of the community of tabla performers he presented a peshkār of kaharwā ang. Due to this he was honored as khalifā. There were many compositions of solo tabla performances which were presented in a form of a pair.

The researcher has tried to write most of all those compositions. All those compositions are presented in form of a chapter according to their style of playing. The compositions which are written down and they are given in the form of footnotes. This thesis will help all the students as well as the tabla players of future generation to gain more knowledge. All this information given over here is based on the excerpts of an interview of Prof. Ajay Ashtaputreji.

Prof. Sudhir Kumar Saxena has presented this peshkār in a different form. He created a new composition based on this peshkār which is composed in tishtra jāti. This complete peshkār on tishtra jāti is arranged in such a way that its base is in the peshkār of chatushra jāti i.e ‘dhikḍa dhintā dhāḍhintā’. This seems just an adaptation of peshkār of same tishtra jāti. He also used to begin his performance with a peshkār of chatushra jāti. This used to be followed by the paltā of same peshkār.

Then he used to begin a peshkār of tishtra jāti with thirteenth beat. Then he used to play paltā of tishtra jāti peshkār. It was followed by tihāṇ and end of peshkār. After is from a sam he used to again play the peshkār of chatushra jāti or from the same note of tishtra jāti he used to play a tishtra jāti peshkār-quāyedā. If they used to begin with peshkār of chatushra jāti, then they used to again play paltā in chatushra form of peshkār-quāyedā, in this way they used to continue their performance.
Most of the times, Prof. Saxena has presented this peshkār in his performances. Over the years most of the tablā players of this period have followed and adopted his style of playing in their performances by listening to him. The style that is presented in the recent times is considered to the presentation of Ajrāḍā gharānā.

For this style of presentation the presenter has to have a deep knowledge of laya, as while doing so the laya suddenly varies which is very difficult to play. Though it is difficult to perform but it is very pleasing to the ears as well as sounds extraordinary. It is said that in today’s times the performers of Ajrāḍā gharānā have adopted and included this style of playing as their own.

After a detailed study and deep thinking done on the subject the researcher has come to the conclusion that Ustads of the earlier generation used to present their performance by peshkār of chatushtra jāti. After listening to the recordings of all the exponents of Ajrāḍā gharānā it is found that none of them have played in peshkār of tishtra jāti. But according to Prof. Sudhir kumar Saxena’s opinion, all the performers’ present peshkār, so it is being revised and keeping in mind main principle of peshkār of tishtra jāti, they presented their performances. This was considered as new concept by the performers of this generation and that became the new form of presentation. The artists of this generation of this gharānā use this form of peshkār of the same form. This statement is a fact and not exaggeration that the tablā players of Ajrāḍā gharānā begin their performance in the above said form. It has become a tradition which is followed by the performers of this generation of Ajrāḍā gharānā to present their performance by combining peshkār of tishtra jāti with peshkār of chatushtra jāti.

‘Peshkār of ādi laya’ – Composer Prof. Sudhir Kumar Saxena
After playing a choot, a part of khāli is never played, rather this is only considered as part of khāli. At the same time it doesn’t sound proper if this is only played as khāli. This is a uniqueness of Ajrāḍā gharānā.

4:5:2 Peshkār-Quāyedā or Peshkār Rang

This composition is composed on the basis of the alphabets of a peshkār itself. So it is known as peshkār-quāyedā or peshkār rang. Since last 60 to 70 years the tablā players of this gharānā gives importance to this composition and present during their performance. In this most of the words are included from words of tablā. In this quāyedā, palte are played so artistically that it sounds really pleasing and attractive. The types of paltā included while it is played in this are as petch lagānā, kulī lagānā, giraha lagānā, choot ka paltā, kani ka paltā etc. The most important thing to be remembered while presenting this composition is a kāfiyā and radif it should include words like ginatinākinā or kinatāke dhināginā. The tablā artists of other gharānā change the kāfiyā and radif. They play notes as dhātidhāge tinākinā or tāttāke dhināginā. This takes away the beauty of an original quāyedā. In this quāyedā the practice of Ajrāḍā gharānā of using one and half mātrā is done here very artistically. If this is played as per the above described way then it becomes appealing and also pleasing to the ears. The composition of quāyedā in Delhi and Ajrāḍā gharānā has a calculation of mātrās (beats) as 3+3+2 and 3+2+3. But in this gharānā the composition of a mātrās in this peshkār quāyedā is divided into four and a half and three and a half respectively.

The tradition of playing this composition is only of Ajrāḍā gharānā. The style of playing this composition is slightly different than other quāyedā. This quāyedā can be easily combined with peshkār. In this after the completion on paltā of peshkār, a part of
khāli as choot is played followed by sam and then the entire quāyedā is played. In this Prof. Sudhirkumar Saxena has also composed ‘ādi laya of peshkār-quāyedā’. This ‘ādi laya peshkār-quāyedā’ was presented along with ‘ādi laya peshkār’. The paltā of same ‘ādi laya peshkār-quāyedā’ was played with on khāli with choot in chatushra jāti. That was followed by peshkār-quāyedā of chatushra jāti. One must have an in-depth knowledge of laya to present this form. While presenting this a laya is kept little higher from the beginning. If we use vilambeet laya while playing peshkār-quāyedā of tishtra jāti then the laya slows down, later when peshkār-quāyedā of chatushra jāti is played in a slow laya it doesn’t sound appealing. Shri Sudhir Mainkar explains this in his book as, “The sound that is repeated when a stick is hit on strings, a presentation of a similar sound is produced with great speed is the style of Ajrāḍā gharānā”. Both type of peshkār-quāyedā is given in chapter six.

4:5:3 Quāyedā

In every gharānā a composition of quāyedā is done. It is the most important element for a solo performance. The performers of all the gharānā use quāyedā in their solo performance. Most of the quāyedā are composed in Delhi and Ajrāḍā gharānā. The artists of the above gharānā have the expertise and skill of presenting a quāyedā. In both of these gharānā a special training is given about expanding a quāyedā. We get to listen to the expansion of quāyedā according to its rules and regulations in all the performances given by the tablā players of these gharānā.

In fact Ajrāḍā gharānā is considered to be a son of Deli gharānā. On the basis of the background of quāyedā of Delhi gharānā, the arrangement of words in quāyedā of Ajrāḍā gharānā 1) dhānchā (outline) and 2) main quāyedā is done. Due to the above two components quāyedā of Ajrāḍā gharānā becomes unique. Most of the quāyedā of Delhi gharānā are composed in chatushra Jāti. The artists of Ajrāḍā gharānā innovatively added tishtra jāti in the existing quāyedā to make it appealing and distinct. Quāyedā of Delhi gharānā are composed in single step (ek charan) but in Ajrāḍā gharānā the composition is in two steps (do charan). Compared to quāyedā of Delhi gharānā, the
composition of Ajrāḍā gharānā has more beats. Earlier also it is stated that most of the quāyedā of Delhi gharānā begins with dhā. In Ajrāḍā gharānā quāyedā begins with words like ghe, dhin, dhinā, ghe, gheghenaka. Along with these notes when dhā is used there is a quāyedā produces melodious sound. When along with it a stroke of dhā is added to it while playing makes it very melodious and classy.

A presenter exchanges melodious sounds in a form of Vādi-Samvādi among the above mentioned corresponding sounds and a note dhā. The division of beats in a quāyedā of Ajrāḍā gharānā is different from Delhi and other gharānā. In Delhi gharānā most of the beats is divided in chatusṭra jāṭi as 3+3+2 or 3+2+3. The same if followed by Ajrāḍā gharānā too. In the similar form of Ajrāḍā gharānā a beat is further divided into four and a half or three and a half. It sounds really melodious.

The step of a quāyedā is big then also in its khāli-bhari and its division is composed in the similar pattern. The khāli-bhari of quāyedā of Ajrāḍā gharānā is also very exceptional and superior. In quāyedā of other gharānā the varna that is played in a bhari, the same khāli varna is played in khāli. The similar style is not followed in Ajrāḍā gharānā. While a khāli of quāyedā in this gharānā different varna are presented beautifully.

While quāyedā is expanded it is presented by playing paltā as per pure composition of quāyedā or from its half a portion of quāyedā is opened. When all the paltā of quāyedā is to be played as per pure composition of quāyedā then length of paltā has to be large. That is why the quāyedā is expanded from its half part.

Pandit Sudhir Mainkar writes in his book “Tabla Vādan Me Nihit Saundarya” about khāli-bhari of Ajrāḍā gharānā that; “Quāyedā of any gharānā is presented on the principles of its khāli-bhari at that time sound on the bānyā is created on a first beat. Generally without a sound on the bānyā or sometimes the sound is created on the left in a khāli contrasting words are also created.

While playing quāyedā of Ajrāḍā gharānā variety of opposite sounds played to add beauty to it. This style of presenting quāyedā is a specialty of Ajrāḍā gharānā. This way of presenting a thought is called as Farshbandi.
The Quāyedā of Ajrāḍā Gharānā in which part of Khāli is different.

In Ajrāḍā gharānā quāyedā is divided in two stages as they are given above. In this the part of khāli is completely different from bhari. The words played at the beginning of bhari are dhāgena dhin. Normally tākena tin words should be played in khāli. Here the part of khāli is mentioned as tāketirakaṭa.

Here when paltā is played, they are played and expanded in single laya in a same sequence. When they are played in dugun and chaugun then quāyedā is expanded from its half way. This way it is easy to play and sounds best. When khāli is played differently, its words are generally double than the beginning words of bhari.

When quāyedā of Ajrāḍā gharānā are played, paltā are expanded with different style than other gharānā. The traditional way of presenting a paltā was to begin with playing doharā of quāyedā. In Ajrāḍā gharānā the style of expanding quāyedā is different than the traditional style.

In this style the Ustads used own words like girah lagānā, fandā lagānā, kulfi lagānā, petch lagānā, choot lagānā, and kani ka paltā. They understood the meaning of these words and used them in paltā. This was something very unique about Ajrāḍā gharānā.9 It is said that quāyedā of this gharānā beats are divided and the base of laya is different. Due to this the quāyedā are expanded and paltā are played in the style as discussed above.
Ajrāḍā gharānā has a very different style of presenting quāyedā. Every performer of this gharānā takes special care about making a performance appealing and pleasant. The performers have acquired and adopted an independent style of presenting a quāyedā in five or three laya. If quāyedā is presented in three laya and is of chatushra jāti (sidhi laya) then the performers of this gharānā play thāh laya (vilambeet laya) of quāyedā and then play a tishtra jāti of same quāyedā in dugun which is actually a main quāyedā and then expand paltā of that quāyedā.

If quāyedā is to be played in five laya then the laya is kept low. Quāyedā is played in thāh laya, it is transformed into ādi laya, and plays a main quāyedā in dugun, and then dugun of ādi laya and at the end the main quāyedā is expanded by transforming in chaugun. The above mentioned style was presented by Ustad Habeebuddin Khan. All the performers of present generation have adopted this style by listening to his style of playing. Most of the compositions of this quāyedā which are arranged in tishtra jāti are composed by my guru Pandit Sudhir kumar Saxena. The most prominent quāyedā of Ajrāḍā gharānā is in ādi laya. The middle laya of it, i.e. quāyedā in sidhi laya (chatushra jāti) is also composed by him.

Pandit Sudhir Mainkar mentions in his book ‘Tablā Vādan Mei Nihit Saundarya’ that no other gharānā than Ajrāḍā gharānā use of yatī (virām-punctuation) is done in main quāyedā. In general combination of words in quāyedā is done without virām kriyā (use of punctuations). In the main quāyedā of Ajrāḍā gharānā use of yatī is done in an organized way. The use of it makes a composition most striking.

I gathered one important fact while interviewing Shri Pushkarraj Shridhar that quāyedā of Ajrāḍā gharānā and their expansion is influenced by ‘Shero-Shāyarī’. This is because the artists of those times used to perform in courtyard. They used to spend lot of time at darbār itself. This is the reason the Ustads of those times were encouraged to use lots of ‘Shero-Shāyarī’ in their composition.

In his book ‘Tablā Vādan mei Nihit Saundarya’; Pandit Sudhir Mainkar has also mentioned that Ajrāḍā gharānā used a new system of showing khāli differently which was originated by the artists of ukat gharānā due to the influence of ‘Shero-Shāyarī’. The performers of Ajrāḍā gharānā considered their own quāyedā as shāyarī. They knew
‘Antya Yamak’ (Radif) of a shāyarῑ and ‘Upāntya Yamak’ (Kāfiyā) of the direct poesy. They used present a poetry and present it on tablā in an artistically arranged compositions.¹⁰

The quāyedā of Delhi gharānā are played only in dugun and chaugun. The artists of Ajrāḍā gharānā had taken special care about its execution and how to play a composition on a falak (high speed). The performers of Ajrāḍā gharānā not only kept in mind the unique style of presenting a quāyedā with athgun, but also introduced a different method of executing the same with a high speed. Here is one example of quāyedā of Ajrāḍā gharānā.

Quāyedā of Ajrāḍā gharānā

2 asKD 6 et 3 2 ag et rik 3 2 a2 age g o g i2 n i2 n a i g n a
X 2

2 a2 ag e g o g i2 n i g n i 6 n 2 a2 ag e g o g i t n i t n a i k n a
0 3

t asKD t et 3 t ak et rik 3 t at a k e k o k i t n i t n a i k n a
X 2

2 a2 ag e g o g i2 n i g n i 6 n 2 a2 ag e g o g i2 n i2 n a i g n a
0 3

The above mentioned quāyedā is played in dugun or chaugun only as per the given notation. The same quāyedā is performed differently in athgun. While executing it some words are replaced as – kḍadhetiṭa as tirakiṭa, gheghenaka as ghidanaṭa and dhin dhināginā or tintinākinā as tinnānākena or dhinnānāgena. This sounds just like original quāyedā at the same time it’s ravish becomes attractive as well as pleasant.

After detailed study of all these facts and lot of thinking done by the researcher, it can be concluded that a composition of a quāyedā and its presentation style of Ajrāḍā gharānā is more attractive compared to Delhi gharānā. According to the researcher laya of quāyedā of Ajrāḍā gharānā is influenced by dhrupad-dhamār style of singing. In this

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style of singing the original *laya* remains unchanged but presented different. In a similar way while presenting *quāyedā* original *laya* remains as it is and different *laya* is played in a *quāyedā*. It seems the style of this gharānā is highly influenced by *dhrupad-dhamār*. The other thing observed by the researcher is in this style of presenting a composition maximum use of *anāmikā* is done while executing it. This is the most important achievement of this gharānā.

Earlier we have learnt that Ajrāḍā gharānā belong the category of *paschim baaj* or *bandh baaj*. It is considered as a *shishya* gharānā of Delhi gharānā. In *bandh baaj* the most significant playing style is *quāyedā*. Due to this reason in Ajrāḍā and Delhi gharānā maximum compositions are in *quāyedā*. At the same time compared to any other gharānā, in Ajrāḍā gharānā the variety of *quāyedā* are composed. Due to this, Ajrāḍā gharānā is popular for its *quāyedā*.

**4:5:4 Relā**

If we discuss about my subject it is observed that in *relā* composed in Ajrāḍā gharānā the words used are *tirakīṭa, dhingin, dhinaghiḍanaga, tinakiḍanaga* etc. Along with it the words that are included which may create hindrance while execution still can be played easily in *chaugun* and *athgun*. In this gharānā most of the *relā* that are played are originated from *quāyedā*. Any one part of *quāyedā* is selected, can be easily played in *chaugun* or *athgun* and which feels like played in a flow it is called a *relā-quāyedā*. The playing style of this gharānā is influenced by tāshā. Due to this the composition is also done with similar sound effect. This is mostly used in *relā*.

In reference to this *relā* presented by Ustad Habeebuddin Khan is as follows:

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2 aSi6 Dng    i tr i k 3 t k    t k i 6 DaSn    2 aSi2 Sn aS
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2 aSi g Dng    i 6 n i 6 Dng    i tr i k 3 t k    i tr i k 3 t k
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In this relā the word ghiḍān is not executed openly as purab baaj but it is played on chānti as dhinān. This word gives an effect as if a sound is created by striking wooden sticks on the surface of a tāshā. Ustad Habeebuddin Khan used to play tāshā in the procession of Tāziyā as he was a renowned tāshā player of those times. While playing tāshā he used to play many composition of tablā and specifically played a relā too. I gathered the above facts form the interviewing of Prof. Sudhir kumar Saxena.

The words which create hindrance are like nānākena, dhinaghīdanaga, gheghētirakīta etc. The arrangement of composition is done in such a way that there is no obstacle to a hand while execution of it. Relā with dhingin is practiced more paschim baaj of Ajrāḍā gharānā along with purab baaj.

After discussing all the above the researcher realized that the relā of Ajrāḍā and Farrukhābād gharānā are different due to the compositions of the varna (words), its execution and its language. The relā that are played in Ajrāḍā gharānā are most of originated from quāyedā. Farrukhābād gharānā has composed relā independently.

4:5:5 Ajrāḍā Gharānā’s Tradition of playing system in Madhya and Drut Laya

Ajrāḍā gharānā is popular for compositions in vilambeet laya as quāyedā, relā, peshkār, peshkār-quāyedā, rau etc. From the time of Ustad Habeebuddin Khan madhya laya came into existence in this gharānā. The artists previous to Ustad Habeebuddin Khan never played compositions like tukdā, gat, chakradār, gat-tukdā etc. in their presentation. Since Ustad Habeebuddin Khan had taken training from Ustad Munir khan so perhaps he had included madhya laya and made his presentation might have made his presentation
very attractive. Prof. Sudhir Kumar Saxena and artist of today’s generation have also included madhya laya in his performance.

If we talk about the compositions of this gharānā then lot of importance is given to the language of tablā. The style of performing these compositions is arranged in bandh baaj. We don’t get to hear big compositions in this gharānā rather we find compositions like small mukhdā, gat with one or two āvartan, gat-tukdā, chakradār that are composed in the words of tablā etc. In these compositions there is very less or no use of varna of pakhwaj. I had mentioned that rau not played in earlier times in Ajrāḍā gharānā. When I heard and studied the recording of solo performance of Ustad Habeebuddin Khan I found that he has played more rau based on quāyedā than chalan. I got this information from Pandit Pushkarraj Shridhar.

In the recent times the artists of this gharānā present rau very artistically. A formal training and guidance is to be taken from a teacher guru to present a systematic execution of rau. This is because relā is a composed composition but rau, former training and riyāz are required. It is difficult to play rau without the guidance of guru. Mostly very simple gats are composed. There is very limited use of tihā in gat compositions in this gharānā. The tablā presentation of this gharānā sounds extremely melodious in vilambeet laya compared to mandya laya and drut laya.

The researcher thought about composition of gat-quāyedā he realized a fact that the basic quāyedā of Ajrāḍā gharānā are so melodious that the Ustads of that gharānā never thought about composition gat-quāyedā. The quāyedā of this gharānā had all the specialties and qualities required in a quāyedā which are not found in the quāyedā of any other gharānā. Due to this reason gat-quāyedā is not practiced much in Ajrāḍā gharānā. In this gharānā gat-quāyedā is very similar to quāyedā. In this gharānā there are very few compositions of gat-quāyedā. It is played very rarely. This composition is played after the quāyedā in solo performance. In a composition of gat-tukdā of Ajrāḍā gharānā words of tablā is used but its length is extended by maximum one to two āvartan. In this gharānā this composition is not practiced much rather more than gat-tukdā small pieces of gat are used. Gat is purely composed with words of tablā, but in gat-tukdā influence of pakhwaj has also seen. So, in this gharānā quantity of gat-tukdā is very less. In Ajrāḍā gharānā gat is based on the principle of khāli-bhari and equally based on dugun or chaugun laya. In a composition of gat of Ajrāḍā gharānā words of tablā is used but its
length is extended by maximum one āvartan. In this gharānā only simple gat has composed not a variety of gat has composed as in Farrukhābād gharānā. The chakradār is also composed in less beats rather than more. The compositions of this gharānā are less melodious compared to the compositions of Farrukhābād gharānā. Generally the compositions are arranged in variety of laya but that is not heard in the compositions of this gharānā.

The researcher is associated with this gharānā so with that reference I have gathered information about the compositions from my guru as well as from some of the departed Ustads and eminent artist of this gharānā and tried to present the same in forthcoming chapters.
FOOTNOTES

1 Excerpt from Interview with Prof. Sudhir Kumar Saxena

2 “Ṭablā Vādan me Nihit Saundarya” author Pt. Sudhir Mainkar pg.221

3 “Ajṛāḍā Ghārāane ki Vidhivat Ṭablā Vādan Paramparā”: Ek Adhyayan, (Thesis) author Prof (Dr.) Ajay Ashtaputre pg.28

4 (a) Excerpts from interview with Prof. Sudhir Kumar Saxena.
    (b) “Ṭablā Vādan me Nihit Saundarya” author Pandit Sudhir Mainkar.

5 Excerpt from the interview with Prof. Sudhir Kumar Saxena and Pandit Pushkaraj Shridhar

6 Excerpt from interview with Prof. Sudhir Kumar Saxena

7 “Ṭablā Vādan Kalā Aur Shāstra” author Sudhir Mainkar pg.26

8 “Ṭablā Vādan Me Nihit Saundarya” author Pandit Sudhir Mainkar, pg.89

9 Excerpts from interview with Prof. Sudhir Kumar Saxena and Pandit Pushkaraj Shridhar

10 “Ṭablā Vādan Me Nihit Saundarya” author Pandit Sudhir Mainkar, pg.212

11 “Ṭablā Vādan Me Nihit Saundarya” author Pandit Sudhir Mainkar, pg.101