CHAPTER – II

Ajrāḍā Gharānā’s Origin and its Development

In the first chapter of the thesis the researcher has comprised brief information about gharānā and its six types. The researcher is making a humble attempt to present the thesis on the topic ‘The Traditional style of Tablā Playing of Ajrāḍā and Farrukhābād Gharānā: A Comparative Study. Subsequently in this chapter, the researcher has tried to give the comprehensive information about Ajrāḍā gharānā.

2.1 Ajrāḍā: A Geographical Vision

In the field of Indian Music whichever gharānā was founded by the Ustad or Guru gave it a name of a native village, town or city.

If we study in detail about any tablā gharānā from its style of playing, all of them are mentioned by the name of a village, town or city. To name some of the main ancient and well-known gharānās are Delhi, Ajrāḍā, Lucknow, Farrukhābād, Banaras and Punjab. The origin of Ajrāḍā gharānā is a village Ajrāḍā near Merath District of Uttar Pradesh state. Merath (Ajrāḍā) district is adjacent to Delhi i.e. nearly 90 km away.

2.1.1 Brief Introduction of state Uttar Pradesh

Uttar Pradesh is a huge but significant state of India which is located in northern plateau. It has Nepal and Tibet towards north boundary, to west of it is Madhya Pradesh, on East Bihar and Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Delhi and Rajasthan towards its west.
2.1.2 History of Merath City

Merath is considered to be an important town located in the west of Uttar Pradesh. It is located just 90 km. away from Delhi.

Merath is walled city. It is surrounded by four gates namely;

1. Kambho Darwājā
2. Khernagar Darwājā
3. Budhānā Darwājā
4. Shāhpeer Darwājā

Long time ago, there was a bailee bazār among these four darwājā. There were various types of shops at the ground floor. Above these shops were brothels of mistresses.

It is also famous as the office of C.M.A. i.e. (Controller of Military Account) is located here. Other than that, it is also considered as the biggest manufacturing center of sports goods. Khadi Boli is the dialect of this region. Agriculture is a main occupation of this region as it is located between the river Gangā and Yamunā.

This town is also famous for ‘The Revolt of 1857’. This town is closely associated with music. India’s finest sārangi were manufactured here. These days we may not have sārangi players over here but half of the shops of the town, we find sārangi.

Apart from sārangi there were 850 houses of artists. Once there lived a tablā maker over here named Munne Khan. He used to make the best pudi of tablā. He used to charge six times more for a pudi, from the people who were not natives of Merath.

There is a shāhipeer tomb near shāhipeer darwājā of Merath. Shāhipeer was known as a ‘Peer’ of ‘Mirasi’ community. Most of the Ustad of that time preferred to do their riyāz near this tomb. Merath is famous in the field of music not only because tablā is made over here but it is famous as the Ajrādā gharānā exists here (as Ajrādā gharānā belongs to this place.) From this point of view it proves that Merath was famous then and it is famous now too.¹
2.2 The Origin of Ajrāḍā Gharānā

The origin of tablā playing of Ajrāḍā gharānā took place in Ajrāḍā village. The inspiration of origin of this gharānā is associated with Delhi gharānā. According to eminent tablā player Prof Sudhir Kumar Saxena ‘The Ajrāḍā is a son of Delhi gharānā’. He has stated in his book ‘The Art of Tablā Rhythm’ that “The Ajrāḍā gharānā is commonly regarded as an offshoot of Delhi gharānā.” Ajrāḍā gharānā is closely associated with Delhi gharānā, not only that Ajrāḍā gharānā was created from the style of Delhi gharānā.

2.2.1 The Founder of Ajrāḍā Gharānā

According to the historical hierarchy two real brothers Ustad Kallu Khan and Ustad Meeru Khan, the key founder of this gharānā, were native of Ajrāḍā village. It is said that both brothers came to Delhi in 1770 AD and settled over here with the intention of learning tablā. They become disciples of tablā player Ustad Sitab Khan of Delhi. He took training from his Ustad almost for twelve years. The hard work and riyaż in tablā continued for twelve years. Both the brothers acquired thorough knowledge given by their Ustad and returned to hometown Ajrāḍā. From the above evidence it becomes clear that Ajrāḍā gharānā is a gift of Delhi gharānā. A renowned tablā player, Pandit Sudhir Mainkar of Mumbai who had taken his training from Delhi and Ajrāḍā gharānā confirms the above information.

According to him all the other gharānā except Punjab, are directly or indirectly associated to Delhi gharānā by blood or guru-shishya. Though the style of tablā playing of all these gharānā may not be similar but they originated from Delhi gharānā. Delhi gharānā is considered to be original gharānā in the field of tablā playing. All the other gharānā originated from Delhi gharānā, so Delhi is certainly an originator of them. All the disciples took education from the Ustad of Delhi gharānā and settled down in their respective villages. As per the musical environment of the place they composed their own bandishes. In this way the new gharānā were established. The renowned tablā player of
Farrukhābād gharānā, Pandit Mulgaonkar also confirms that Delhi gharānā is the origin (birth place) of all gharānā. According to him – “Delhi gharānā means the earliest and original gharānā of solo style of tablā playing.” The main reason behind this was scholar of music like Ameer Khusro and Miyā Taansen belonged to Delhi. Besides this many renowned artists got rajāshray at the Royal Court of Emperor Akbar. According to him – “Delhi gharānā means the earliest and original gharānā of solo style of tablā playing.”

Due to this rajāshray was given to the artists not only from Delhi but outside Delhi at the Royal Court. The emperor was impressed with their performance or art he used to include such artists to his Royal Court. We find a mention of a caste named Dhādhī in the Royal Court of Emperor Akbar. The original occupation of this caste was to play charma vādyā (instruments made of leather). From this fact one can assume that Delhi gharānā had originated during Emperor Akbar’s period.

There were many artists present in the Royal Court of Emperor Akbar. They were playing various musical instruments. From this we confirm that the artists were highly respected during Emperor Akbar’s period. Due to this during this period there was a scope for development for the tradition of avanadhya instruments. If we think of the topic tablā, during earlier period we hear more of use of pakhāwaj at the time of vocal performance of dhrupad-dhamār. At that time Sadarang and Adarang the two sons of Khusaro Khan came up with new style khyāl gāyaki. This gāyaki was melodious and soft compared to dhrupad-dhamār. To accompany khyāl gāyaki pakhāwaj was not considered appropriate. Tablā was originated at that time. Ustad Siddhar Khan Dhādhī of Delhi gharānā put lots of efforts and hard work to improvised the compositions of pakhāwaj and introduced new style of tablā playing. The Delhi gharānā came into existence with his innovative ideas he composed new bandish.

2.3 The History of Delhi Gharānā

Keeping in mind the above information and thoughts it is essential to do ‘The Methodical Study of Ajrāḍā Gharānā’. In this we include questions like ‘Who laid the foundation of Delhi gharānā?’, ‘How was the method and style of tablā playing of this
gharānā?’ On the basis of this the researcher feels necessary to begin with the brief outline of Delhi gharānā.

2:3:1 Delhi- A ‘Apabhraunsh’ Word

Delhi is *apabhraunsh* of a word *dehli*. The original word *dehli* means ‘door frame’ (*Chaukhat*). This means ‘the main entrance house is called *chaukhat*.’

2:3:2 The First Tablā Player from Delhi Gharānā

The first tablā player of Delhi gharānā was Ustad Siddhar Khan. He laid the foundation of this gharānā. Many books written on tablā do not agree with his name as Ustad Siddhar Khan. In some books his name is mentioned as Ustad Sudhaar Khan. Pandit Arvind Mulgaonkar has also mentioned his name as Ustad Sudhaar Khan in his book tablā.

In their books ‘The Art of Tablā Rhythm’ by Prof. Sudhir Kumar Saxena and ‘Tablā Vādan Me Nihit Saudarya’ by Pandit Sudhir Mainkar state his name as Ustad Siddhar Khan.

After reading various books by scholars on this subject we concluded that these two names were of same artist. The description given about these two names proved to be identical. It is also assumed that the style of tablā playing is invented by Ustad Siddhar Khan of Delhi gharānā.

After listening to several opinions and the discussion done with the scholars it is concluded that –Ustad Siddhar Khan of Delhi was the first tablā player. He and his heirs tried to establish a unique and independent style of playing tablā and successfully kept pakhāwaj different from them. Their style of playing tablā created a new *baaj* which is known as Delhi *baaj* or *paschim baaj*. 
2:3:3 The Period of Ustad Sudhar (Siddhar) Khan

Ustad Siddhar Khan is considered to be the beginner as well as the founder of Delhi gharānā. First experiment of tabla was done by him. Making this statement is not an exaggeration. Ustad Siddhar Khan was renowned tabla player of his period. With lot of efforts he composed innovative bandishes of tabla. With his knowledge about this art and with the help of his heirs and disciples, he tried to bring a revolution in the world of tabla.

The information neither about birth place nor date of birth of Ustad Siddhar (Sudhar) Khan is available anywhere. We can surely state that his period should be 1700 AD. Dr. Aaban Mistry has mentioned in his book-"it is difficult to give reference about his birth place but his period should be somewhere around 1700 AD". If we throw the light on the History of the Indian Music, we come to know that the Indian Music progressed under various Royal courts of the kingdoms. Without going into deep study of let’s say Ustad Siddhar Khan was there at the Royal Court of Delhi. He stayed in Delhi and brought through development in tabla playing.

2:3:4 Independent Tabla playing Style by Ustad Siddhar Khan

From the above available facts it is tried to prove that 1700 AD should be the approximate period of Ustad Siddhar (Sudhaar) Khan. During the period that he spent at the Royal Court he created a baaj which he named as Delhi baaj. This evolution of baaj brought uniqueness to Indian Music as well as the tabla.

During those times use of pakhāwaj was very common. During that period inventing a new instrument- tabla and to introducing a complete baaj was the greatest gift to the Indian Music. It is very difficult to create a new instrument in Indian Music other than that of pakhāwaj, introduce it as percussion and introduce innovative style of playing it.

Keeping in mind the above Ustad Siddhar Khan originated tabla and its style of playing. Due to the propaganda done by him the growth of tabla and its playing style was
possible. About this Pandit Sudhir Mainkar has stated that Ustad Siddhar Khan (Sudhaar Khan), his heir and the artists of this gharānā had developed an independent style of playing tablā. They had successfully tried to keep the tablā playing style distinctive from pakhāwaj.

It seems the ancestors of Ustad Siddhar Khan’s gharānā used to play and instrument called dukkdad. This instrument was mainly made of two vessels. To get various sounds from this instrument mostly its edge was used. It seems that the playing style of this instrument influenced the Delhi baaj. Due to this Delhi gharānā was further established as ‘chānti ka baaj’ and was recognized by that name.12

From this we confirm that to create a sound two thin sticks were stroked on the edge of the dukkdad. In the similar way the fingers were used on the edge of the tablā to create a sound. Due to this Delhi is called ‘kinār ka baaj’ or ‘bandh baaj’.

From the above fact it is proved that the style of playing of Delhi gharānā was influenced by an instrument called dukkdad. At the same time one cannot forget the fact that an established instrument of that period pakhāwaj equally influenced the playing style of Delhi gharānā. The credit goes to Ustad Siddhar Khan who altered and improvised the bandishes of pakhāwaj and made them appropriate to be played on a tablā.

2:3:5 Specialities and Playing Style of Delhi Gharānā

1. The composition of Delhi gharānā is soft and melodious. In the bandish of this gharānā, we observe a wonderful use of enormous quāyedā, impressive tvkjā and gat etc. There is a maximum use of chānti’s bols in the bandish of this gharānā. In the bandish of this gharānā only two fingers are used to create sound like tiṭa, tirukiṭa, ḱadhetiṭa, dhati, etc. Therefore this gharānā is also known as ‘chānti ka baaj’ or ‘do ungaliro ka baaj’.

2. Most of the compositions of this gharānā are played using a forefinger (tarjani) and middle finger (madhyamā). In a bānya also these two fingers are used. It is observed that in the style of this gharānā word tirkiṭ is repetitively used.
The Ustad of those times had started use of ring finger (anāmika) in their playing style. At that time while playing ta of tirāki̯a the middle finger (madhyamā) was used; immediately after it while playing ti also the same finger is to be used.

While doing so the movement of the fingers must be getting stuck. To give solution to this problem ring finger (anāmikā) was used. Due to this playing this bol become easy. Since then used of ring finger (anāmikā) is practiced.

3. In the style of this gharānā no specific nikās is used for high tempo, rather same fingers and surface are used for the vilambeet laya, dugun and chaugun. This resulted into two shortcomings follow:
I) It created deadlock in presentation of compositions.
II) If it is presented with speed then the composition does not sound rhythmic and melodious.

If it is insisted to present the compositions of Delhi gharānā with speed then it is observed that they lose their beauty. The players of this gharānā, who were aware of the disadvantage of speed, they presented their compositions in madhyalaya. In short, the tablā playing of Delhi gharānā is generally presented in madhyalaya.13

4) When we observe the playing style of this gharānā the immediate fact comes to our mind is that the style of pakhāwaj playing does not influence it at all. This also proves that nikās of this gharānā is totally different from pakhāwaj. Therefore the baaj of Delhi gharānā is not at all influenced by pakhāwaj.

5) In this gharānā main compositions like, peshkār, quāyedā, relā etc. are significantly used. These compositions are in expandable form and the compositions are simple, easy and small in size. In these compositions there are few hidden vistār-bij. Once the development and extension of vistār-bij were openly played then the varna of these compositions came forward in the form of paltās and were expanded further.

While doing the expansion of these bandishes the different words or phrases were used alternatively. Due to this we get to hear many new and melodious formations. Sometime few melodious pieces of notations were created while doing these variations.
The above things were considered while doing the expansion of quāyedā of Delhi gharānā.14

6) The composition of this gharānā mostly composed in chatrasutra jāti or sometimes in tishtra form too.

7) The quāyedā of Delhi gharānā are composed in such a pattern that they can be played in dugun or chaugun laya. In this gharānā the tradition of playing rau of quāyedā is never followed. The bandish played in vilambeet laya are similar to drut laya.

8) In Delhi gharānā, when a solo performance is given bandishes like peshkār, quāyedā, relā etc. sounds very rhythmic and melodious, but at the time of performing the madhya laya, the artists of this gharānā are also take a help of purab baaj. At the same time the tablā players of this gharānā who had worked really hard to achieve the style of this gharānā and present only what they have learnt from the Ustad. While doing so they perform rhythmic and melodious gat, ṭukḍā, mukhḍā, mohrā etc. They have also created their own compositions for the purpose of solo performance.

Prof. Sudhir Kumar Sexena gives a scientific principle for the fingers used for playing tablā in this gharānā. According to him the forefinger finger (tarjani) of our right hand is more powerful compared to other fingers. It is exactly opposite in the case of our left hand.

The forefinger (tarjani) of our left hand is the weakest than that of other fingers. There are no difficulties faced while playing tablā in the style of Delhi gharānā, as to produce rhythm the use of right hand is done.

At the same time when the forefinger of left hand is used while playing bānyā, it becomes difficult as the fingers become weak. According to Prof. Sudhir Kumar Saxena, tablā playing should always be done at ease as well as pleasant. It should neither be harm our body nor difficult to perform.
These days the artists of Delhi gharānā do not use two fingers as per the old tradition but prefer using other fingers too. As per this method tablā playing becomes convenient and easy.\textsuperscript{15}

2:4 Ajrāḍā Gharānā according to reference of the Promoter of Delhi Gharānā

It is said that Ustad Siddhar Khan Dhādhī (Sudhaar Khan) is the promoter of Delhi gharānā. He had three sons. i) Bugara Khan ii) Ghaseet Khan and iii) unknown (his name is not known yet). Bugara Khan had two sons namely Ustad Sitab Khan and Ustad Gulab Khan. Two disciples of Ustad Sitab Khan were from Ajrāḍā village.

They were two brothers; namely Kallu Khan and Miru Khan. They took training from Ustad Sitab Khan and settled down in their village Ajrāḍā. They worked really hard, composed many new \textit{bandishes} and established new playing style. These playing style are recognized as creations of Ajrāḍā gharānā.

2:4:1 The Era of Ustad Kallu Khan and Ustad Miru Khan

It is a fact that the two brothers Kallu Khan and Miru Khan came to Delhi to learn tablā. Both of them became disciples of renowned tablā player of Delhi gharānā Ustad Sitab Khan and took training under him. According to the thesis of Prof. Ajay Ashtaputre, before Kallu Khan and Miru Khan, Miya Basant was also following this tradition and the founder of Ajrāḍā gharānā is Miya Basant. This fact is verified. The detail about the year in which these two became disciples is not known to anyone or the history about their period is still unknown.

It is assumed that they came to Delhi approximately around second half of the 18\textsuperscript{th} Century. It is assumed so as 1700 AD is the period of Ustad Siddhar (Sudhar) Khan,
which is proved in the beginning of this chapter. After that the third generation is of
Ustad Sitab Khan.

If the period of one generation is nearby of forty years then two generation is of
eighty years. With this calculation the third generation should be somewhere around 1780
AD. The period of Kallu Khan and Miru Khan is considered to be approximately 1780
AD. In his book Dr. Aaban Mistry has also mentioned their period as 1780 AD.\textsuperscript{16}

\textbf{2:4:2 Development of Ajrāḍā Gharānā}

The names of Kallu Khan and Miru Khan should be mentioned first, when we
discuss about the development of Ajrāḍā gharānā. These two brothers took rigorous
training for twelve years from renowned tablā player of Delhi gharānā Ustad Sitab Khan.
They did lot of hard work to learn the style of this gharānā. Then they came and settled in
their village Ajrāḍā (Dist. Merath), of State Uttar Pradesh.

With lot of hard work and with the help of original \textit{bandish} of Delhi gharānā, they
created innovative \textit{bandishes} of their own. They taught all these \textit{bandish} to their disciples
too. This way they contributed a lot to develop new styles of Ajrāḍā gharānā.

\textbf{2:4:3 The Inclusion of ‘Ādi Laya’ in Ajrāḍā Gharānā}

As mentioned earlier, the tablā of Delhi gharānā entirely depends on \textit{chatushra jāti}. Kallu Khan and Meeru Khan worked really hard and composed new \textit{bandishes}. To
bring variations in their compositions they used ādi laya. This is how ādi laya was
included in Ajrāḍā gharānā.

It is a fact that when one needs to establish a separate identity and bring beauty to
any gharānā, some new principles as well as innovative compositions are to be
introduced. To achieve the same ādi laya is included in the playing style of Ajrāḍā
gharānā. Henceforth it was observed that the style of Ajrāḍā gharānā is dependent on ādi
laya. These days this gharānā is known as ‘ādi laya ka baaj’.
2:5 Purposes

The researcher is always trying to prove to be unique, to create one’s own identity it is necessary to innovate and present something new to the masses. While doing so it becomes essential to highlight the limitations in the work done by others. This helps to establish own identity. To achieve this one has to keep own character aside and present oneself in such a way that the identity becomes exceptional.

The Khalifā of Ajrāḍā gharānā Ustad Kallu Khan and Ustad Miru Khan did hard work and created new and innovative compositions. They aimed to created innovative compositions by highlighting the limitations in the style of Delhi gharānā and thus established a new gharānā.

2:6 Necessities

The phrase ‘Necessity is the mother of all inventions’ is an indication of successful undertaking of Delhi gharānā. Immediately after completion of training of Delhi baaj, Ustad Kallu Khan and Ustad Miru Khan went back to their native place Ajrāḍā. They had realized that Delhi baaj was played with two fingers i.e. middle finger (madhyamā) and fore finger (tarjani).

At the same time the compositions of Delhi gharānā has many complications related to speed. Therefore the bandish of this gharānā can be played only in madhya laya. They arranged the words of the bandishes that way, which were easy to play in chaugun and athagun. They also encouraged use of ring finger (anāmikā) in compositions and considered to play them on higher laya.

After that whichever composition composed were created in such a way that there will be used of ring finger (anāmikā) and will be presented with speed. This experiment gave this gharānā tremendous success and identity. In this way the Ajrāḍā gharānā was established.
2:7 Experiments

With their experience Ustad Kallu Khan and Ustad Miru Khan had already realized that in their style of tablā playing, to get better speed the use of other fingers is required instead of only two fingers that were already used. They had also realized that to bring the diversity in their style of playing new experiments were required. While doing this they used the third finger in the style of Delhi and distributed the words to be played among three fingers. e.g. *tirakiṭa* was played using *madhyamā* and *tarjani*. Here they used ring finger (*anāmikā*) to play *ṭa* and played it with a speed.

They also introduced some new *varna* and made their own style different from Delhi gharānā. In these compositions they began to experiment *ādi laya* which was not there in the present form. The experiment of *ādi laya* is done in the compositions independent tablā playing. Due to this experiment the gharanā of *ādi laya* was also recognized as Ajrāḍā gharanā.

2:8 Successes

The inclusion of *ādi laya* they broke the monotony of Delhi gharanā. They introduced new *bandishes* and presented *laykāri* to the masses. These experiments were approved and liked by the masses. Whatever compositions presented by them were attractive and different from Delhi gharanā. This way the tablā playing of this gharanā made its own identity as well as was highly recognized in the society of music circle.

According to Prof. Sudhir Kumar Saxena; at that time establishing a new gharanā means the most difficult task, just like ‘*Lohe Ke Chane Chabāna*’. The *gurujan*, seniors and scholars of those times were too orthodox. Then any new composition or style was to be presented before the heirs and disciples. After doing in depth discussion on such compositions they were rejected or accepted. Their work was also presented in front of the scholars and they were accepted too. The achievement of Ustad Kallu Khan and Ustad Miru Khan is really appreciable that they established innovative style of playing and a new gharanā in such an orthodox atmosphere.
1. Prof. Sudhir Kumar Saxena interview ref. Dr. Ajay Ashraputre – “Ajrāḍā Gharāne Ki Vidhivat Tablā Vādan Paramparā”: Ek Adhyayan

2. Excerpts from Prof. Sudhir Kumar Saxena’s interview

3. “The Art of Tablā rhythm”-author Prof. Sudhir Kumar Saxena pg.116


8 “Ajrāḍā Gharāne ke Vidhivat Tablā Vādan Paramparā”: Ek Adhyayan (Thesis) author-Prof. (Dr.) Ajay Ashtaputre pg.5

9. “Ajrāḍā Gharāne ke Vidhivat Tablā Vādan Paramparā”: Ek Adhyayan (Thesis) author Prof (Dr.) Ajay Ashtaputre pg.6


11. “Ajrāḍā Gharāne ke Vidhivat Tablā Vādan Paramparā”: Ek Adhyayan (Thesis) author Prof (Dr.) Ajay Ashtaputre pg.11-12.


15. Excerpts from Prof. Sudhir Kumar Saxena’s interview

16 “Pakhāwaj Aur Tablā ke Gharāne Awam Paramparāē” by authoress Dr. Aabaan Mistry pg.133

17 “Ajrāḍā Gharāne ke Vidhivat Tablā Vādan Paramparā”: Ek Adhyayan (Thesis) author Prof (Dr.) Ajay Ashtaputre pg.22
18 Excerpts from Prof. Sudhir Kumar Saxena’s interview