Conclusion:

Primitive music underwent evolution in every century and Music became more and more sophisticated. From the *Samuha gaan* (Group singing) of the Vedic period till the solo singing of today, Music experienced changes from diverse angles. A continuous history of this change is observed. In the Vedic period, the influence of Literature on music was more prominent that the root elements of music. The applications of music included praising deities, describing Nature, spirituality and other forms of singing which in present time has gone far beyond, become increasingly for enjoyment and branched out into several forms of singing. Classical, semi-classical and Light music include several varieties within these genres that express human emotion and developed in that direction. Ancient music was more faithful to the word, which today went to become also music-oriented and even purely music oriented. Music got more and more stylized and its forms of singing developed. The influence of Literature in ancient music lessened in Classical Music. There used to be compositions full of words or just a tune which was improvised in the modern period to become a raga composition, e.g. *Dhrupad*, *Khayal*, and *Thumri*, wherein there are unlimited opportunities for improvisation. In the modern era, the influence of words lessened and Music was liberated in a true sense. In the context of classical music, *jaati* and *Prabandh* singing saw more influence of Literature and less Music, in *Dhrupad*, both were equal, and today, in *Khayal* or *Thumri*, there is more influence of Music and less of Literature. This is how change occurred.

In *Dhrupad*, as the word and Literature were of equal importance, at the beginning expanded Raga *aalaap* or later *Sthayi*, *antara*, *sanchari* and *aabhog* were four divisions in which compositions were made. In *Khayal*, before *Bandish* expansion of *raga* became limited but the tradition of expanding the raga in just 4-5 lines of just the *sthayi* and *antara*. In this manner, music was no longer oriented around the word but became self-sufficient. On account of the elements of improvisation, first *Vaanis* and later the concept of *Khayal gharanas* came into existence. *Samuh gayan* for Music is mentioned in the Vedas, which changed to solo singing in the modern period. In every period the practical and theoretical aspects evolved and developed and related works were created.
Tunes and songs were changed to stylized forms of song. Improvisation led to the stylization of song and music and the raga system developed, wherein lay inexhaustible scope for creativity.

1) Apparently, the Agra gharana is the oldest with an unbroken recorded history from Nayak Gopal of 13th century (take 3/4 generations before Haji Sujan Khan 1455-1538 A.D.). The musical lineage of the Agra gharana is in itself a matter of great pride. The continuity of the tradition and its heritage remained intact through diverse socio-political changes over the centuries on account of the efforts of the musicians within the gharana.

2) There were four stages in the evolution of the Agra gharana:

   a) Gopal Nayak to Haji Sujan Khan – a predominantly Prabandha and Dhrupad tradition

   b) Haji Sujan Khan to Ghagge Khudabux – Dhrupad tradition

   c) Ghagge Khudabux to Faiyaz Khan – Khayal music with influence of Dhrupad

   d) Faiyaz Khan to present generation of musician – Dhrupad-ized Khayal music with influence of other gharanas that merged into the Agra gharana.

This history clearly shows that the musicians wholeheartedly passed on the wealth of musical heritage to the next generation.

3) Over the last 550 years (after Haji Sujan Khan), the musicians of the Agra gharana witnessed change in the styles of singing. From Dhrupads of Nauhar Bani, they embraced the Khayal singing, Khusravi Khayal, Koul-Kalwana, Thumri. With the changes in time and the taste of the audiences, musicians also began practicing and singing various genres of classical and semi classical styles. Therefore, they were able to learn, practice, preserve and pass on the various genres of music such as Dhrupad, Dhamar, Sadhra, Bengi Dhrupad, Langda Dhrupad, Khayal, Khusravi Khayal, Thumri, Tappa, Tarana, Koul-Kalwana to the next generations.

4) Despite being traditional orthodox Dhrupad singers, they openheartedly accepted the Khayal genre and blended the 'Bol Banav' of Nauhar Bani into the Khayal of Gwalior
and gifted the prodigiously multidimensional Agra gharana of the Khayal to Indian Music.

5) One the most interesting discoveries is that Khayal gayaki was always practiced in Agra gharana simultaneously with the Gwalior gharana, which is the oldest khayal tradition. However, khayal bandishes by some artistes of the Agra gharana and the collections of the oldest composers of bandishes found only in the Agra gharana including Sadarang, Adarang and Manrang lead us to conclude that the Agra gharana of khayal music is just as old as Gwalior gharana. Because the Agra artistes were Dhrupad singers, and at the time singing Khayal was considered inferior to singing Dhrupad, they did not make stage presentations of Khayal music. That led to the erroneous belief that Agra artistes trained in Khayal in the Gwalior gharana and that none of the other gharanases had a tradition of Khayal music.

5) Several other gharanases such as Sikandara, Rangeela, Khurja, Mathura, Atrauli and so on merged into the Agra gharana and it became richer over the decades.

6) The musicians earned acclaim in the various princely states and courts of the country including Agra, Mathura, Gwalior, Tonk, Jaipur, Rampur, Indore, Baroda, Jodhpur, Bikaner, Mysore, Riva, Bharatpur, Alwar, Kashmir, Kolhapur, and Patiala. They mesmerized the royalty and the masses of music lovers of all these regions.

7) Although the musicians of Agra gharana put a premium on informal techniques and individualistic approach in teaching, they did develop certain formal methodologies. A characteristic unique to this gharana is the training imparted in the 18 Ang for complete presentation of Dhrupad and Khayal. This training was used to enrich the improvisation and elaboration of the raga and the bandish to ensure a rich experience for the audience.

8) Dhrupad style is considered to be very systematic. Agra gharana's Khayal singers made it the base on which to create their own singing style. For this reason, under oath, they cared for the principles of classical music with great commitment and without any compromising. In the shruti-rich singing of the nom-tom aalaap of Dhrupad Ang, instead of expanding the Merukhand with each note, they preserved the Raagaang of North Indian Music by placing a premium on Ragaalaap. They put to good use the Rupak
Aalaap through their *bandishes*, also using bol *banav, bol baant, layakari* according to the sentiment of the lyrics of the *bandishes*, and employed all the 18 *Angs* as and when required during training. *Taans* hamper the purity of a raga. However, the artistes of this *gharana* made use of *Raagaang* even there, and delivered on their oath of keeping the purity of ragas intact. In the last century, purity of the ragas and discipline were ignored and importance was given only to readiness of the voice and improvisation, but the artistes of Agra *gharana* always stayed away from such negligence.

9) There are two main parts of the presentation of a *raja*: Raga *Aalaap* and *Bandish*. Agra artistes emphasized the importance of the notes and *laya* in both and set a new precedent. Although *Khayal* is a modern form of singing, the *Dhrupad Ang* was beautifully woven into it to create novelty in tradition. The *bandish* was treated as a theme, and it was dramatically expanded with amazing innovation by the artistes of the Agra *gharana*. In singing a *bandish*, they exhibited a prodigious talent for weaving together the words with the *layakari*, giving various soulful examples to Music. They created the necessary techniques of *taal* and *laya* for the purpose. In retaining the awareness of the audience continuously, mastery of the *laya* – in addition to that of the *swaras* – contributes greatly. The importance of *laya* and *taal* and the mastery of these two aspects ensured great popularity for the artistes of the Agra *gharana*.

10) As a part of their oath, they devotedly maintained the dignity of the performance with the help of precise phrases, ease of expression, consistency in musical forms, graceful yet powerful renditions and a creative approach. They never spared best efforts in ensuring the purity of Ragas and discipline of *Dhrupad* and *Khayal* traditions, in their renditions.

After the analysis of more than a thousand compositions from various sources such as recordings, books, private collections and interviewing some of leading maestros and disciples of this *gharana*, I have been able to achieve the following findings and conclusion.

1) Any creation in Indian classical music can be mainly in three areas:

   a) *Raga*
b) Compositions

c) Talas

Agra gharana musicians worked with all these three aspects and created a great number of beautiful Ragas, Bandishes and Talas. Within these form many colorful varieties and creations and its quantity is simply amazing. Such creations became a strong point of this gharana. Many vocalists and instrumentalists were inspired and started performing the creations of this gharana.

2) From the conversations and interviews with various scholars, Pandits and Ustads of Music, I got to know that the several popular Ragas of Indian classical Music are either creations of Agra gharana or they were popularized or first presented by Agra gharana. Some of the best creations of the gharana are as follows:

Traditional: Jog, Barwa, Jhinjhoti, Khemkalyan, Shyam Kalyan, Khambavati, Gorakh Kalyan, Nand, Rageshree, Nat Bihag, Purva etc.

New and very popular: Jogkauns, Salag varali, Kusumi Kalyan, Ahiravati, Mangal Bhairav.

3) Agra gharana artistes preserved and accumulated very rare Ragas from their ancestors and from the masters of the various gharanas that merged into it. Musicians like S. N. Ratanjankar, K.G. Ginde, Dinkar Kaikini, Sharafat Hussain, Yunus Hussain Khan etc. popularized Carnatic Ragas in North Indian music style. Carnatic Ragas popularized or brought into North Indian classical music by Agra gharana are:

Narayani, Charukeshi, Kirwani, Poorva Kalyan, Abhogi, Malaymarutam, Nat Bhairavi, Manoranjani, Hansdhwani, Vachaspati etc.

Composers like S. N. Ratanjankar, Dinkar Kaikini composed Carnatic music varieties based on Indian Ragas.

4) Agra gharana has been a storehouse of a wide range of rare ragas and bandishes - including varieties of Nat, Bilawal, Kanada, Malhar, Bhairav, Sarang, Kalyan, Gauri, Dhanashree and many more. Their repertoire comprises many other independent ragas as
well as many Jod Ragas, Mishra Ragas and Sankirna Ragas. These Ragas were not only meticulously preserved, but as a part of creative thought process, many new and beautiful phrases within the raga were identified or created and new dimensions were given to them.

5) Based on various principles of 'Creations of new Ragas', many musicians of this gharana created a great number of new Ragas, particularly in the last century. The creation of new compositions has been found to be a very normal practice since Haji Sujan Khan. It is observed that almost all musicians composed new compositions and then dedicated them to their ancestors. On account of this tradition, a vast cache of bandishes was gifted to the world of music by this gharana. Some of the bandishes even served as the identity of their respective ragas. Many ragas were considered substitutes for these bandishes. Literally thousands of bandishes based on raga and laya-taal were created. These bandishes were composed in forms such as dhrupad, dhamar, saadraa, khayal to semi-classical compositions such as thumri, tarana and tappa. Raga and bandish compositions were created in various taals for artistes of the concert as well as university scholars in forms such as Lakshangeet, Sargam geet, group songs, patriotic songs, prayers, and songs of praise.

6) Musicians of the Agra gharana did not limit their role to simply on-stage performance but went on to contribute at the intellectual in making new creations, presenting old creations in new style, teaching them deliberately to their students, and inspiring students to carry on the path of musical innovation and creativity.

7) As with ragas, creative changes in the old talas, creation of new talas, as with jod ragas the creation of jod talas – such were the unprecedented experiments carried out. Bandishes were created as per the meter of the newly created talas. In addition to performance, ongoing creativity was their ideal, goal and nature. On account of this, Music received unprecedented compositions. These were adopted by artistes of all gharanas as well as ordinary students of Music.

About 1853, the celebrated musician, Sher Khan, first migrated to Mumbai from Agra. He was then the most respected representative of the Agra gharana. Since then to the end
of the last century, Agra gharana musicians dominated the Indian classical musical scene in India. In this chapter, an analysis of the major figures of the Agra gharana helped me derive very interesting facts as to how they could influence the musical scene in India over more than a century. It is important to note here the reasons for the India-wide reach of this gharana:

a) Emergence of most popular performing artistes such as - Nathani Khan, Bhaskarbua Bakhale, Faiyaz Khan, Sharafat Hussain Khan, Latafat Hussain Khan, Master Krishnarao Phulambrikar, Dilipchandra Vedi and many more.

b) Most respected Gurus and Performers such as - Vilayat Hussain Khan, Ata Hussain Khan, S N Ratanjankar, Dilipchandra Vedi, Master Krishnarao Phulambrikar, Khadim Hussain Khan, Jagannathbua Purohit, Gajananbua Joshi, Jitendra Abhisheki and their countless disciples and followers.

c) Academicians-plus-Gurus and their work at the Universities, academic Institutions were - S N Ratanjankar, Yunus Hussain Khan, Shafi Ahmed Khan, Ghulam Rasool Khan, Dinkar Kaikini, Sumati Mutatkar, S C R Bhat, K G Ginde, Madhusudan Joshi, and many more.

Faiyaz Khan was the most highly acclaimed artiste of not only the gharana but was in general an iconic figure of North Indian music in the last century. His endless experimentation in performances spanned various genres ranging from the most orthodox and traditional Dhrupad genre to the then most modern form of Ghazals. Hence, he could become the most revered and sought-after musician of both the masses and the connoisseurs. It is hardly surprising then that he was recognized as the musician of the century.

Vilayat Hussain Khan was a guru of unparalleled caliber. His in-depth knowledge of the ancient art of music, huge repertoire of Ragas and Bandishes, and dedication toward promotion of ancient Art music attracted most talented youngsters of his time, who later gained name and fame. This included female students of very respectable family, which was uncommon in those days. Most of his disciples further carried forward his legacy with the sincerest missionary zeal and promoted the Agra gharana.
S. N. Ratanjankar was a multifaceted musician. His talent as a performer, Guru, Administrator, academician, composer, and musicologist was truly amazing. He produced a series of followers and pupils who followed in his footsteps and equally contributed to Indian music on a very large scale. His contribution to the complete revival and systemization of All-India Radio and efforts to give a platform to all deserving traditional and non-traditional artistes was amazing. Because of his vision and administrative ability, Indian classical music could spread all over India.

We can see the diversity within the gharana in terms of style of various, aesthetic approaches, voice projection, use of Ragas, Bandishes and talas and overall style of performance, creations and contributions. The stylistics Agra gharana could be divided in six main branches viz.:


After analyzing their personalities and contribution, we can say that Agra gharana vocalists passed on their knowledge extensively outside the family. Many non-family musicians and disciples from non-musical background were trained by the Agra masters, who in turn spread further the legacy of the Agra gharana not only the traditional way but also in an institutional mode of training. In this manner, we find several direct disciples who are practicing musicians and representatives of the gharana, as well as connoisseurs, students of Music from Universities and Institutions, who were benefitted by the masters of the Agra gharana. Musicians of this gharana were never merely performers but treated the art in its totality. They did not limit music to only entertainment but made it an instrument of education for the masses by various means, to reach the common man. Their service to Music is therefore without a parallel.

Every innovative artiste makes efforts to continuously seek novelty. A performing art is like a stream which has change and re-invention for salient characteristics. Such innovative artistes are always in search of reasons and opportunities for their innovation. The artistes of the Agra gharana retained the base of classical music and brought about
changes as and when required, such as going from Dhrupad in their singing to the Khayal of the Dhrupad Ang. They proved their innovative spirit through modern-day instruments such as Sangeet Natak, cinema and other media.

Bharat Muni wrote the 'Natyashastra' on the subject of theatre. He presented therein thought on every single aspect of theatre. He thought of theatre as a multidisciplinary area wherein arts such as music and dance are also put to use. Therefore, he talked at length about these as well, in his treatise. Therein, he has treated all of these other arts as aspects of Theatre, underlined the worship of the rasa or emotions as a final goal of the arts, and emphasized the need for new and ongoing experimentation. The artistes of the Agra gharana put in similar efforts at innovation in the various forms of classical and semi-classical as well as light music.

Musicians of the Agra gharana showed their innovation through several popular branches of Music. The most important of these was Marathi Natya Sangeet and other forms included film music, Nazrul Geeti and Ragapradhan of Bengal. For any popular music style, the lyrics are important. Agra gharana was based on the Nauhar Bani of Dhrupad. Use of sweet words has been a specialty of the Nauhar Bani. Agra artistes made use of the words as per the sentiment of the raga. For that, they composed in all styles of music. With laya and taal ang, beautiful improvisation of many notes and words was second nature to these artistes, for which reason the artistes of this gharana were attracted to and could easily experiment with the branches of popular music. And for this reason, the artistes were able to successfully handle innovation in theatre and film music, Nazrul Geeti and Ragapradhan of Bengal as well as coke studio, fusion music, and choir singing. The compositions of the Swaminarayan and Pushtimargiya sects also made use of the ragas and bandishes of the Agra gharana. In addition, several artistes of light music were attracted enough to learn from artistes of the Agra gharana and won fame as singers and composers of theatre and film music and other kinds of music.

In addition to the musical genres mentioned above, another important area is musicology. Here too, artistes of the Agra gharana provided important contributions. If a performing artiste writes about the discipline of music, it is more authentic. This was amply illustrated by venerable seers from Bharat Muni to Bhatkhande. The Agra gharana
always had a treasure trove of traditional knowledge of music that was full of its own history, raga-raginis and bandishes. Therefore, these scholars had readily available material to work on. Several artistes of the gharana did unparalleled work in the area of musicology in the 20th century. Vilayat Hussain Khan, a Khayal singer, wrote a documentary treatise titled 'Sangeetagyon ke Sansmaran', making a valuable historical contribution in the process. A scholar of the caliber of S.N. Ratanjankar wrote on several aspects of Music. After a systematized education in Music was introduced at the university level through efforts made by him and Bhatkhande, he provided services first as the principal of the Marris College and later as the Vice Chancellor of the Khairagarh University. He provided guidance to several students in both theory and practical. He inspired his students to also contribute to the theory of Music. One of his students, Sumati Mutatkar, was the first Ph.D. holder in Music. Ratanjankar and several other artistes worked in musicology and served Music by providing their services through diverse educational institutions. In this manner, after a hiatus of 150-200 years, prevailing music practice was written about in theoretical terms under the aegis of the Agra gharana. These artistes – in addition to writing books – also helped promote Music through seminars, lecture-demonstrations, and so on. In this manner, the artistes of the Agra gharana successfully took Indian music in its totality to the people through various popular Music genres, musicology, institutionalized academic training and writing books. An innovative and erudite tradition in Music was created under the aegis of the Agra gharana. This contribution should be written in golden letters in History.