CHAPTER : III

"ORIGIN OF SITAR"

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3.1 “Origin of Sitar (An Analytical Study)

The sitar is the most popular instrument in India today. There are various theories and opinions about the origin of sitar. We find some references in the Indian history about this instrument in 13th century and then in 18th century. As has already been discussed in details, the stringed instruments of vedic, ancient period, so we come to know about the period, veenas which were prevalent in those times. It is a hard fact that Tri-tantri veena is the base, but to the arrangement of strings the name, the tuning and the plucking technique of the medieval ‘vina’ only a wooden lute bowl, replacing one gourd has been added to make the south Indian ‘veena’. The sitar on the contrary has the nucleus of strings and tuning. It is an accepted fact that sitar is a descendant of the ‘veena’ prevalent in India during the 10th century but who is the inventor of ‘Sitar’?

The origin of sitar is connected with the following versions :-

1. Sitar is an Iranian/Persian instrument.

2.1 Ameer Khusro invented the ‘Sitar’ (Sehtaar) which became ‘Sitar’.

2.2 The ancient Tri-tantri veena was given a new name seh-taar by Ameer Khusro. He used his own language (Persian) for Tri-tantri as “Seh-taar”

2.3 The renowned Indian musician Naushaad Sahib said in an interview in T.V. (19,12,92) that Ameer Khusro brought ‘Seh-taar’ from
Iran and set three more strings on this instrument. The Muslims put one more string which was called chikari.

2.4. According to Abul Fazal in Aine-Akbari - Ameer Khusro invented ‘Ta-taar’.


2.6. “Ameer Khusro was the inventor of the string instrument ‘Sitar’. ‘Seh’ means three and taar means strings and hence the name.”

2.7. Mobarad Hussain Khan who is the Director of Radio Bangladesh and nephew of Ustad Alaudin Khan is of the opinion that sitar is invented by Ameer Khusro.

3. Sitar is a modification of kinnari or Tri-tantri or Sapat-tantri veena.

4. In Maharashtra, ‘Sattar’ was a very popular instrument having seven strings. Then this instrument took the name of ‘Satar’ and after some period, people started calling it by the name of ‘Sitar’.

5. “Sitar is the changed form of the Nibadh Tamburr. It had five to six strings.”

“The ancient Tri-Tantri veena was given a new name Seh-taar by Ameer-Khusro. He used his own language for Tri-tantri ass ‘Seh-taar’.

6. Another opinion is that ‘Jantar’ had five strings and sixteen frets, so sitar is originated from this instrument.
An analytical study is needed to make out the origin of sitar a pure solution,

1. During the eleventh and twelvth centuries, Persian became the official language of the whole Indian Empire. The double reed Shehnai, Suran was adopted by Hindus as well as by the Muslims. The shehnai reached the South but under a new name Nagaswaram.

But if we go through the Indian history we find that Khusro Malik was succeeded by Mohammed Gauri in the year 1186 and he took the regime of Lahore in his own hands. Khusro Malik was also a musician but he was slaved by Mohammed Gauri and so there is no literature found written by Khusro Malik.

In the times of Alaudin Khilji (1296 A.D. - 1316 A.D.) Ameer Khusro was a great Persian poet and musician. He mixed persian Arabic and Turkish styles of music with the inherited music of the sub-continent. He is known for the vital role played in the enrichment of the music of that period. Through his efforts, it rose to the heights of popularity. He was the sole musician of that period. In the 13th century we don’t find any other musician’s name in the Indian history who progressed in the instrumental music and who remained unrivaled for centuries.

“Though we find about sixty names of veenas is old treatises but when we come across the 13th century’s music, we find the name of Ameer Khusro who is said to be the inventor of sitar.”

As the three stringed ‘veena’ was already there, so he can’t be
the inventor but it is a hard fact that he being a Persian named the tri-
tantri veena as seh-taar in his own language i.e. Persian which means
three stringed instrument.

It is very important to note the four synonymic names:

1. Khusro Malik — 1186 A.D.
2. Ameer Khusro — 1246 - 1316 A.D.
3. Meer Khusro — 1657 - 1707 A.D.

1. Khusro Malik — In the year 1186, he was the ruler of Lahore
but was succeeded by Mohammed Gauri. Khusro Malik was lover of
music but we don’t find anything written by him on music or by any
other, about him as a musician, so he can’t be the inventor of sitar.

2. Ameer Khusro — Ameer Khusro’s father Mohammed
Shaifudin came from Khorasan, a city in Faras (Persia) to India. Ameer
Khusro was born in U.P. in Patiali village in Etta Dist. From the very
beginning of his childhood he had the talent of music in him, so he
became a great musician and poet of that period. He joined the court
of the king of Kaikubad where he remained from 1287 to 1290. Then
he came to the court of king Jalaludin Khilji where he was conferred
the title of Ameer, though his actual name was Abul Hasan. In the year
1296 he again was conferred the title of Khusru-e-shairan. “In one of
his famous books, Dawalrani Khijri, Ameer Khusro has described about
one Utsav which was held at the marriage of Alaudin-khilji’s son, where
another musician Gopal Nayak was also present. He was an expert in singing ‘Rag Kadam’, a kind of long song containing 32 ragas and so many talas.⁶

In 1316, Ameer Khusro joined the court of Kutbuddin Khilji where he remained up to 1320. He then was taken as a musician in the court of Gayasudin Tughlak then in Muhammad Tughlak’s court in 1325. Ameer Khusro had met Gopal Nayak before also. Gopal Nayak was a court singer in North India’s Devgiri Riyasat whose king was Ram-Chander. So he was brought to the court of Delhi where the two musicians made great efforts to raise the standards of music.

“Ameer Khusro gave a new name to the tri-tantri veena as ‘Sehtaar’ and added three more strings to the instrument. He invented new Ragas: — Sarpara, Sazgiri, Yaman, Raat Ki Pooriya, Poorvi, Todi, Mazeer etc.”⁷

3. **Meer Khusro** — In Aurangzeb’s time 1657-1707 the name of Meer Khusro is seen in the Indian history. But we don’t find any of his works on music or any musical instrument. In that period, music declined because Aurangzeb was not a lover of music. He ordered to bury all the musical instruments as history tells us, but kept some musical instruments and some musicians for the recreation at one or the other occasion.

It is wrong to connect this name with the invention of sitar, because we don’t find his name in the list of the musicians of that period.
namely:— Khushaal Khan, Visram Khan, Hayyat Khan, Sarasnain Khan, Sukhisen Kalawant, Kripa Mridang Rai - (Kripa was conferred the title of Mridang Rai).

4. **Khusro Khan** :— In the period of Muhammed Shah Rangeelai, 1670-1748 - the name of Nemat Khan or Sadarang is famous in the Indian history of music. His works are remembered till now. He was a great singer of his time. His younger brother khusro khan also came in light with the efforts of his brother and the rumour was spread that khusro khan has invented a new instrument named sitar, whereas it was already there. “History tells us about the invention of Rabab and Surbahar by Tansen on the basis of Seh-taar or sitar and veena”. The ‘seh’taar’ which had originated in 13th century, had taken its name as ‘sitar’ in the due course of time.

Though Tambur, Rabab and Sarangi were common in those days sitar could not become popular with the vocalists as vocal music was at its heights.

Acharaya Brahaspati has given so many names of the instrumentalists and singers in which one Hasan Khan’s name comes in context with ‘Sitar Baaj’ which he used in his ‘Been’. It clarifies that sitar had already come into existence in the 13th century. Few persons knew to play it, so it is wrong to say that khusro khan invented the ‘sitar’.

The renowned Indian musician Naushaad Sahib said (in a T.V. interview on 19.12.1992) that sitar’s origin is mainly from veena and it
was Ameer Khusro who brought the ‘Seh-taar’ from Iran and set three more strings on this instrument and the Muslims put fourth one more string which was called ‘Chikari’. “Abul Fazal has written in his book Aine-Akbari that Ameer Khusro invented ‘Ta-taar.’” It can be printing mistake because wherever Ameer Khusro’s reference comes we find only sehtaar word, so it might be ‘Seh-taar’.

**Interview** :— Shujjat Hussain Khan when interviewed on Feb. 11.1993 in Rose garden, Kala Bhawan, Sector 16, Chandigarh, where he had come to give a sitar recital said :

“I never went in theory part nor I read much about the origin of sitar. But Ameer Khusro is said to be the inventor of sitar.”

“In Turky and Iranian literature, we find the name of seh-taar”.

The period of almost two hundred years following Ameer Khusro is considered to be the dark period in Northern India’s history. Wars were raged continuously, art and cultural progress came to a stand still. There was devastation all over, which gave a set back to music and musicians of that period. Though in Akbar’s (16th Cent.) time, music flourished and Tansen, Baiju Bawra and Swami Haridas were great musicians of that period.

“Tansen invented Rabab on the basis of `Seh-taar’ and veena.”

This evident shows the presence of present day sitar in the name of `sehtar’.

I shall like to bring forth the wording of great sitar maestro of
international fame, Pt. Ravi Shankar ji, who has given some of the details of sitar in his book “My Music My Life”.

“Shortly after the time of Sharangdev there lived an extraordinary inventor and genius Ameer Khusro, who was not only an unrivaled scholar and lover of music and skilled musician but also a poet and statesman. He was of Persian lineage, but was born and brought up in India. He acquired his musical fame at the court of Sultan Alaudin Khilji, a Pathan ruler of Delhi, where he was a celebrated singer. Because of his musical talents and immense imitative powers, he was called ‘Shrutidar’, a name given to one, who can reproduce any sound, musical or non-musical even if he had heard it only once.

It is not unnatural that since he had such prominent positions, the historians of that time gave him the credit for many things that he really did not bring about. He is responsible for a number of modifications of musical instruments and in particular sitar, for creating some ragas which are heard nowadays and for developing and popularising some well known styles of singing.

Many scholars believe that sitar was in existence long before Ameer Khusro’s time, in diverse shapes, in different regions of India. It was variously called Tri-tantri veena (Sanskrit meaning three stringed) chitra veena (seven stringed) or Vipanchi. But it is an unavoidable fact that Ameer Khusro did make certain alterations and gave a new name ‘Seh-taar’ (Persian name for three stringed instrument).
Innovations in Strings and Frets:

1. The order of the strings was reversed giving the instrument the present day universal arrangement of the strings.

2. Another ancient stringed instrument the Been or Veena still has its strings in the old ‘inside out’ order, i.e., the main playing string is on the inside and the bass strings are on the outside part of the instrument.

3. Another improvement that Ameer Khusro brought to the sitar was to make the frets moveable (frets are the metal strips or bass that go across the finger board of the instrument).

“In the ancient instruments such as the veena, the frets were fixed with wax and hence could not be moved. Ameer khusro attached silken then gut to the frets and tied them at the back of the sitar’s neck, so that the player could move the frets up and down. According to this method, the finger board was divided into the seven note octave after eliminating some frets and they could be moved up or down for the use of half or whole tones”.12

“Ameer Khusro made the following rags:— Muwakif, Ush-Shak, Sarparda, Sajgiri, Ba-Karaj, Mazeer, Gaman, Fargaan, Sanam Zeelai, Farodast, Yemni, Aiman, Basant etc. He made an instrument called ‘Sehtaar’ with three strings.”13

To make it more clear that Ameer Khusro made great contributions
to music and musical instruments, one has to go to the depth of history of middle age, i.e. the years of early 13th century. The Devgiri Dynasty came to an end. (Southern India) because of the attack by the Yawans on India. Music of India was effected badly. This was the time when the instruments and ragas of Persia came to India. Delhi was under Sultan Alaudin Khilji’s rule 1216-1296 and music flourished in his time like a stream, because in his court there was a great musician (court singer) named Abul Hassan, who with his talents in music pleased the sultan and was conferred the title of Ameer and Khusro-a-shairan. It is said that he was the first - Turk who mixed the Persian and Indian ragas and brought newness in the music.

The third version that ‘Sattar’ became ‘Sitar’ is totally wrong as we don’t get any reference of this type except that Pt. Omkar Nath said it.

**Views of the Famous Authors:**

Now I am depicting some of the authors who have given their own opinions about the origin of sitar:-

1. “Tri tantri veena, when modified became ‘Jantar’ and with further changes it took the name of sitar”.

2. “Jantar of Rajasthan which was prevalent in middle age was a modification of Kinnari veena, so Jantar or Kinnari veena can be referred to as the Mother of Sitar, because Tri tantri veena and Jantar had the frets.”
3. "Sitar a stringed instrument with its feminine grace is believed to have been devised by Ameer Khusro in the 14th century". \(^1\)

4. "Sitar was invented by Ameer Khusro as veena was difficult to learn, so he modified the tri-tantri veena, which had Baaj ka taar, Shadaj & pancham string." \(^2\)

5. "Alaudin Khilji's minister Ameer Khusro introduced an instrument which he named 'Seh-taar'." \(^3\)

6. "Hazrat Ameer Khusro popularised tri-tantri veena as 'Seh-taar' or Alah-Baja means, three stringed instrument." \(^4\)

7. "Abul Hassan who is known as Ameer Khusro invented this instrument 'Seh-taar' on the basis of veena". \(^5\)

9. "In fourteenth century, Ameer Khusro invented 'Seh-taar' on the basis of veena and Tanpura. He gave the name 'seh-taar' which means three strings. Jalaludin gave the honour of 'Ameer' to Abul Hasan because he was a great musician and inventor of 'Seh-taar'. Alaudin Khilzi and Tughlak also gave this 'Upadhi' to him because he invented 'Seh-taar'." \(^6\)

From the above survey, it seems most likely, however, that the sitar was in fact originally a three stringed instrument i.e. tri-tantri instrument that was given the name of 'sehtaar' which became 'sitar' with the passage of time.

3.1.1 Swaras of Vedic, Ancient and Modern Period (Historical Survey)

When we are discussing about the instrument, we must know
about the swaras it produces. From where it got its swaras is a point of historical survey. Which swaras were used in Vaidic period in music - Vocal & on Veena?

There were three categories of swaras in Vaidic period:

1. Udata — Ni Ga
2. Anudata — Re Dha
3. Swarit — Sa Ma Pa

The scale was divided into two tetrachords as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purvanga (lower)</th>
<th>Uttarang (upper)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sa</td>
<td>Pa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Re</td>
<td>Dha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ga</td>
<td>Ni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ma</td>
<td>Sa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swarit</td>
<td>Swarit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anudata</td>
<td>Anudata</td>
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<tr>
<td>Udata</td>
<td>Udata</td>
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<tr>
<td>Swarit</td>
<td>Swarit</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>B</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>C</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Sam-ved Period** — The seven notes were:

1. Pratham — Ma — First
2. Dvitiya — Ga — Second
3. Tritiya — Re — Third
4. Chaturatha — Sa — Fourth
5. Pancham — Dha — Fifth
6. Atiswara — Ni — Extreme note
These swaras were set on sitar according to the ‘Gram’ which means a family and ‘its’ members. There were three gram namely:

1. Shadaj Gram
2. Madhayam gram
3. Gandhaar gram

"चतुष्वर्त्तुष्वेव पद्धमदयम पंचमा।
३४ त्रिस्त्रोऽस्म धेवलो॥”

Sa swara was considered to be Achal swara.

**Ancient Period** — They divided their octave into 22 intervals called “shruties”.

**Middle Age & Modern Age** — The Hindu octave was divided into twenty two semi tones.

The 22 shruties were:

- Tiwra
- Kumudvati
- Manda
- Chhandowati — Sa or Shadaj
- Dayawati
- Ranjani
- Raktika — Re or Rikhabh
- Rudri
- Krodha — Ga or Gandhaar
1. The scale which begins with Sa, is called shadaj gram.

2. The scale which begins with Ga, is known as Gandhar gram.

3. The scale which starts from Ma is called as Madhyam gram.

The difference of shruties has already been shown above in the three grams. Ancient as well as the musicians of today agree to this point. “These shruties are known by the same name today also.

To study and realize all these different intervals and to accustom the ear to them, it is necessary to have an instrument allowing of their accurate execution. The simplest is of course a stringed instrument of

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gram</th>
<th>Sruti</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shadaj</td>
<td>Ma or Madhyam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gandhar</td>
<td>Pa or Pancham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madhyam</td>
<td>Dha or Dhaiwat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadaj</td>
<td>Ni or Nishaad</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
sufficient dimensions such as Indian sitar for example with moveable frets and with the exact place of shruties marked on the side on which the frets move.

To mark these places, tension of swaras is kept in mind, then a mark is made on the wood, so that the fret may easily be replaced whenever the same note is desired. This is to be done with all the swaras of the scale. The whole length of the instrument becomes marked. By changing the place of the fret, the correct tuning for each mode is obtained.

All the 22 divisions can’t be utilized simultaneously in a mode or in any melodic or harmonic combination. At the most twelve and at least five notes are used, the normal number being seven.

“The science of the sound is the chemistry of universe. If the shruties and frets are set right, the sound of the notes will be accurate and accuracy of swaras has such a great power to influence the animate & inanimate things. From among these 22 shruties, we have seven shudh swaras (Natural notes) four KomalSwaras (Flat notes) one is tiwra swara, (sharp note). In the arrangement of the shruties, modern usage is diametrically opposite to the classical one, the later placing them before the note to which they respectively belong. While the former gives their position after the notes. It is difficult to determine when or by whom the alteration was effected. The arrangement of the frets of veena and other stringed instruments accord with the modern acceptation of the principle. In the classical treatise the disposition of
the notes is reversed in the case of stringed instruments and out of this reversed arrangement perhaps, the modern theory about the arrangement of the position of the shruties has been worked out.  

3.2 ‘Changing Forms of Sitar’

13th to 16th Century:

Change is the inherent nature of the world. Change and development are inevitable in everything of the phenomena. It is a part and parcel of human society. So we find their new and novel forms and types from time to time. Sitar has also come a long way. The thirteenth and fourteenth century’s evidences make it clear that the ‘sehataar’ had three strings. But when Ameer Khusro added 3 more strings to this instrument and the muslims added one chikari string it, it became seven stringed instrument. “In the sixteenth century Imratsen & Nihalsen put extra gourd on the back of the daamd of sitar which lengthened the (Aass) of the string, which helped in solo vaadan of sitar.”

In the begining it had eleven sympathetic strings (Tarabs) & seven strings where were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strings</th>
<th>Tuning</th>
<th>Material</th>
<th>Gauge used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Baaj ki taar</td>
<td>(M)</td>
<td>High carbon musical steel wire</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Jore ki taar</td>
<td>(S)</td>
<td>Bronze</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Do</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bronze</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Mandar</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Bronze</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Ali Mandra</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>High Carbon Steel</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Madhaya</td>
<td>Sa.</td>
<td>This string can be left off entirely to fascilitate playing</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Chikari</td>
<td>Sa</td>
<td>High carbon</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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24
1. Baaj String:— This is the main string on which swaras are produced when we press on it with the index finger of our left hand. In the 13th, 14th century, it was called the Madhyam string or Nayaki string. Today this word has almost been omitted and the first string is called Baaj Ka Taar. This string is tuned as Madhayam of Mandur Saptak.

2,3. Jore ka taar:— In side the Baaj ka taar, there are two strings which are tuned into shadaj of Mandra Saptak.

4. The fourth string is tuned into shadaj of Mandra Saptak.

5. The fifth one is tuned into Pancham of Mandra Saptak.

6. The next (sixth) string is tuned into shadaj of Madhya Saptak.

7. Then comes the seventh string. It is called chikari or Papaya string. It is tuned into shadaj of Taar-Saptak. In alaap or jhala, this string brings beauty and charm whenever the player wants to have a little pause, he makes a continuity of the raga with this string by striking it in rhythm. It helps to enrich the beauty and sweetness in sitar vaadan.  

16th to 19th century:— “Though the technique of tuning the instrument remains the same today, as it was done in thebegining, but the curious musician always makes the changes. The first tarab tuned to Madhya Shadaj, second to Manda Nishaad and 3rd again to Madhya Shadaj. Then all the remaining tarabs were tuned according to the swaras of the raga to be played. If these strings are tuned accurately then these strings make a resonant sound while the upper bass strings are played.”
In Abul Fazal’s time - The Jantan had existed with fine strings and sixteen frets.

**20th Century** :— “Until the year 1950, Kachhapi veena was played by the artists which had a flattened gourd and it had tarab strings also. The name was Kachchapi because it had a shape of Kachhua. It had 16 frets and had seven upper strings.”

In the middle of twentieth century, the sitar had adopted its shape with round gourd, 19 frets, seven upper strings and 11 tarabs.

The great artists always make new inventions in their art. Pt. Ravi Shankar Ji of Senia Gharana has kept only five strings in his sitar.

1. Baaj ki taar
2. One Jore ki taar
3. Mandra Pancham
4. Kharaj ki taar
5. Chikari or Papeeha.”

The sitar has the highest place in all the stringed instrument. The frets and strings can be different in every musician’s sitar, as they want to have.

**3.3 Different Typs of Sitars Prevalent**

The player sets his sitar according to his convenience. (End of 3.2).

**Begin** :— There are basically two types of sitars.

1. Simple sitar
2. Tarafdar sitar
1. **Simple Sitar** — It has seven strings and no tarabs. It is suited or good for beginners because it is small in form and size. It has a gourd with 2 feet long finger board. A bridge is placed on the gourd and then the strings are set on the finger-board which are tied with the pegs fitted on the inner side and upper side of the finger board.

2. **Tarafdar Sitar** — The second type of sitar has seven strings and eleven sympathetic tarabs placed beneath the upper strings. Though the sympathetic strings are never played, but they give continuous humming (Jhankaar) as the upper strings are played. Sometimes the artist just touches them with the mizraab in such a way that they produce very sweet sound. It’s length is 4½ feet. It’s finger board is 34” long and is 3” wide. The frets are tied on the finger-board with the pegs on it. The finger board is made of sheesham wood, Tanu wood or Burma teek wood. The back side of the finger board is in round shape on which levelled wood piece is fitted on which the spring holes are done to adjust tarabs and frets fitted on it.

Besides these two types of sitars we find two other sitars in accordance with their frets :-

1. **Chal Thaat ki sitar**

2. **Achal Thaat ki sitar**

1. **Chal Thaat ki sitar** — Until 1930 the sitars had 16 frets:

   \begin{align*}
   M & P & Dha & Dha & Ni & Sa & Re & Ga \\
   Ma & Ma & Pa & Dha & Ni & Sa & Re & Ga & = & 16 & frets.
   \end{align*}
There are many ragas in which a particular swara used in Aroh, is not used in Avroh, so to produce the needed swara by pulling the string every time is a tough job when the speed is there. For example in raga sarang, Des and Khamaj, Ni Shudh is used in their Aroh and Komal Ni in Avrohan. In 16 fretted sitar there was only one Ni, hence the problem. To avoid this obstacle, the musicians put three more frets. With this the number of frets became 19 and the following swaras were derived from these frets:

Ma Pa Dha Dha Ni Ni Sa Re Ga Ga
Ma Ma Pa Dha Ni Ni Sa Re Ga = 19 frets
Re Dha komal is got by raising shudh Re & Dha.

Some people attach one more fret for taar saptaks Ma Swara, so that they can reach upto full Taar saptak or upper octave.

A few years back, only baaj ka taar was used in the sitars for playing purpose, while others were just touched to produce resonant sound, but with the new experiments, after getting mandra Ma from baaj ki taar, we get mandra Ga, Re Sa from Jore ki taar. For ati mandra Ni Dha Pa, we play the Ati mandra pancham string, and in the end for Ati mandra Ma Ga Re Sa, we play Ati mandra shadaj string.

2. Achal Thaat Ki Sitar — In this sitar, there are 24 frets.

Ma Pa Dha Dha Ni Ni Sa Re Re Ga Ga Ma
Ma Pa Dha Dha Ni Ni Sa Re Re Ga Ga Ma = 24
This type of sitar has the capacity to play all the swaras of the raga without moving the frets.

This sitar is not prevalent today because the same distance of the swaras creates confusion in the mind of the sitar player about swaras. Above all, sometimes that swara is touched which is Varjit in the raga. So the modern musician does not prefer this sitar. The small distance in frets is a hindrance for the fingers also.

So we see that though there have been so many changes in the frets, tarabs, & strings, the sitar is touching the heights of popularity and respect in the world of music. After so many modifications in shape, size and techniques, the present sitar is with us today. The 19 fretted sitar has capacity to bring out 3 saptaks or scales which can cover all the 9 rasas or bhavas described in Indian culture.

3.4 “Structural Form of Sitar”

As has been explained in the preceeding section, that the sitar has existed in various shapes and sizes in the past. Different members of frets and strings were in simultaneous use. Although this situation still persists, the sitar used for concerts, and performances and for the learners has become fairly standardized. An artist can customize his sitar to some extent to suit his particular style of playing, or he can adjust the timber to his taste, but these are usually minor adjustments such as changing the curvature of the bridge. The instrument is specifically termed as Chal-That Tarafdaar Sitar because it incorporates a set of
sympathetically resonating wires (tarafs) under the frets and because the frets need to be repositioned for certain scale types.

The details of construction and functional use of each of 'its' parts follows:

(a) **Gourd** :

The belly is made of Jack or some other resonant wood i.e. 'tumba'. The gourd is kept empty from inside so that the sound should give proper effect, when the strings are pressed. Gourd is the main resonating chamber of the instrument:

(b) **Tabli** :

This is the sound board. It is 14" wide. The thinness of the tabli has an important place because it is the part where the bridge or Jawari is to be kept. So the curve has an art work. It is slightly convex in shape in order to make it more resilient. It's thinness provides more resonance but it should be thick enough to withstand the pressure of the strings.

(c) **Gulu** :

When gourd and tabli are fixed then there comes a place where these two are to be joined together. The main structural function of the Gulu is to provide strong base through which Daand may be indirectly joined to the gourd resonator.

(d) **Langot or Longorus or Keel** :

This is a small triangular piece of deer horn or a nail which works as an anchor to which all the strings are attached. It is set on the lower portion of the tumba, from where all the wires go to their destinations.

(e) **Daand** :

This is a 34" long pipe which is three inches wide.
It is the neck of the instrument. Burmese teak wood is best for making a daand, but some sitar makers use sheesham or Tanu wood also. The back side of the ‘daand’ is round in shape on which levelled wood piece is fitted. Then the string holes are done on the upper part of the finger board to adjust tarabs and frets fitted on it.

(f) Jawari or Ghurach:— It is the bridge of the sitar - a flat plate of ivory. The seven playing strings pass over it. The distance of language and ghurach is 4". The ghurach is 3" Long and 1" wide. The upper portion of the ghurach is known as Jawari. The top part is fashioned from an entelope horn, the bottom from tun wood. In order to produce an even, rich sound, the Jawari must be filed to a precise curvature. The filing technique is a highly specialized craft and there are only a few sitar makers in India who can produce a good Jawari. Rikhi Ram was the most renowned in this art work.

(g) Small bridge:— This is also a small piece of entelope horn made into a 1½" x 1" bridge. The eleven tarabs are put on it, from the longot they pass through the daand wholes.

(h) Ati or Pacisa & Darh:— Ati is located at c. 7.5" from the end of the daand and is .75" high. This is a flat piece which works as a support to the five wires. It’s main function is to keep the strings at the level of the bridge. Five small cuts are put on the ivory piece, so that the strings don’t slip and remain on one place.

(i) Taar gahan:— The place where the Taar-gahan is fitted is called ‘Meru’. This is fashioned in the same shape as the Ati is. Its
width is also according to the finger board. There are five main holes in it through which the wire pass through and then are tied to the pegs. The lower position of the holes in the Taar gahan ensures that the wires fit securely into the slots of the Taar-gahan.

(j) Darh :— These are two small posts made of horn that are inserted ventrally into the daand on the instruments right side. These posts support the chikari strings and then are guided towards their respective ‘Khunties’.

(k) Parda or frets :— Uptil 19th century there were 16 frets in the sitar but with the passage of time, the sitar got 19 to 21 frets. These are of steel or brass. In ancient period, the frets were called Sarikas. In middle age, they came to be known as Sundries, and now we call them frets or pardas. When we press the string on the fret, a very resonant sound is produced of different scale on every fret. These frets are some what high levelled in the middle and are kept fitted on the finger board with silken thread or nylon string and are movable, thus allowing for perfect tuning. The best string for tying the frets is manufactured in Assam known as mang. All the strings pass on to these frets. The shape of the frets is one fourth of the half moon or we can say flatly elliptical. The frets can be altered down-wards or upwards also for getting the demanded swaras of a particular scale.

(l) Additional gourd :— Some sitars have one extra gourd at the end of the neck, where the pegs of main strings are fitted. It helps to enrich the sound of the swaras
(m) Pegs or nuts :- A standardized sitar has 20-21 pegs or khunties made of rose wood. Four for main strings and 3 for chikaries & Madhya Shadaj. Seven are big pegs and there are eleven to thirteen small pegs for the tarabs. The arrangement of tarabs admits of their being shifted so as to produce intervals of any particular scale. But now a day, the sitars are found with five main strings, and thirteen tarabs.

(n) Bead or manka :- These oval and swan shaped small pieces of camel bone are pierced in all the 4 wires namely baaj ki taar, Jore Ki taar, located between Ghurach and Langot and the other two are put in Kharaj or Laraj ki taar and chikari wire located between the Pecisa and khunti. These mankas can be lightened or made loose accordingly to make the tuning of the required swara fine.

(o) Mizraab or plectrum :- It is a hard triangular piece of wire made into a finger nail. This word is derived from (Persian- means ‘to beat’) This is worn in the index finger of the right hand.

“In the ancient Granth Amarkosh it is described as ‘Trikon (SK-Three cornered) and in middle ages, it was called ‘Nakhi’ or ‘Nayika’ and the same was given the name of ‘mizraab’.30

Decoration :- Indian sitar has the most beautiful ornamentation done upon it. The decorations are done with entalope horn on tumba & tabli. The grape wine & doves or some picture of sarasvati is carved upon the tabli. Side decoration is done upon the corners of tabli and finger board. The place where the mizrab strokes can marr the wood the decoration of bone protects it.
3.5 Siting Posture Playing Position

There are two sitting postures for playing sitar.

1. Sardari baithak - (sitting) Padmasan.
2. Darbri baithak

**Sardari baithak** — When we fold the left leg beneath the right hip and keep the right leg on left, this is called sardari aasan. The sitar is kept on the sole of the left foot on right side.

**Darbri baithak** — When we fold both knees to our left side and the sitar is kept on ground on right side, pressed with right elbow. The sitar’s finger board remains bent on left side at 60° angle.

When playing the sitar it is to be noted that one does not hold the sitar with both the hands. The movement of the left hand finger should go parallel to the thumb of the left hand, which runs on the frets. Indrani Chakarwarty writes in an essay “Sitar Vaadan Ki Parvidhi tha pribhashik shabdawali” in Bhartiya Sangeet Mein Tantoo Vadhya” by Bhanu Kumar Jain. He writes that for women, the posture with folded knees on left side is the best posture, though the one with left leg folded towards the right side and the right knee towards left side is also maintained by great musicians.31

3.5.1 Wearing of Mizrab or Plectrum

The mizrab is worn in the index finger of the right hand.

**Right hand position**:

1. The thumb should be pressed on the last fret near the gourd. It should not move up and down while playing sitar.
2. The mizrab or plectrum is worn on the index finger of the right hand and should fit on the tip of the finger tightly.

**Left hand position:**

1. In sitar vaadan, two fingers of left hand namely index and middle one are used. The position of the fingers should be in relaxed position.

2. The tips of the fingers should press on the string just behind the fret and not directly on the top of it, to avoid muffling of the sound.

3. The thumb should press lightly on the back of the neck in a position, directly parallel to the index finger.

4. All the four fingers should go together while the index finger and middle fingers run on baaj taar, the other two fingers should also stick to these. This will help in playing fast gets and illustrations.

3.5.2 **An Analytical Study on Mizrab Bols or Mizrab Strokes**

When a stroke is given on baaj ki taar with the plectrum, it is called ‘Bol’. These have been two basic strokes from the very beginning:

1. From out side to inside : “Da” is called ‘Aakarsh’.

2. From inside to out side : ‘Ra. It is called A’pkarsh’.

3. These two basic bols are of one matra each i.e. of one beat. But when we mix Da+Ra, it becomes ‘Dir’. So we derive the Third ‘bol’. This ‘Dir’ is also played in one beat. When the stroke is lengthy than one beat or matra, we put a mark of ‘s’. This is used as a pause
also. In 14th century there were only too 'bols' "De", "Ru". In sitar gats, or compositions mizrab bols play an important role. We can make as many bols as we wish to beautify the raga.

Here are some of the examples which have been in practice since 13th century or so.

13th Century to 16th Century:

To start with, it is necessary and useful to refer to the evolutionary process of the stylistic development of raga exposition on instruments and more particularly, sitar. Just as veena was originally used as accompanying instrument, so was sitar in the initial period. When veena became an independent solo instrument, bols were introduced to create highly ornamental and systematic patterns to beautify the presentations. The bols: De, Ru, Da, Ra. These bols worked just as pause fillers or for accompanyment sake.

16th Century to 20th Century:

During the 18th century, the senia style of sitar players used different bols of mizraab, which made this instrument highly ornamental and systematic at the same time.

1. Da Dir Da Ra
2. Da Ra Dir Da
3. Dir Da Da Ra
4. Da Ra Da Dir
5. Dir Dir Da Ra
6. Da Ra Dir Dir
7. Da Dir Dir Dir
8. Da R-Da SR Da
9. Da SR Da Ra
10. Da Dir SR Da
11. Da Dir Dir Dir Da RDa SR Da
12. Da Ra Dir Dir Da RDa SR Da
13. Dir Da Da Ra S Dir Da Ra
14. Da RDa SR Dir Da Dir Da Ra
15. Da Dir Da Da Dir Dir Da Ra
16. Da Dir Dir Da SR Dir Da Ra
17. Da Dir SR Dir Da Dir Da Ra
18. Dir Da Ra Dir Da Ra Dir Dir
19. Da Dir Da Dir Da Ra Dir Da
20. Da RDa SR Da RDa SR Da Ra
21. Dir Da Dir Da Ra Da Da Ra Dir Da Dir Da Ra Da Ra Da Ra

20th Century: — The sitar players have made one more bol Dra. When Dir bol is played in half of the time taken by ‘Dir’ then it becomes ‘Dra’.

Dir Da Dir Da Ra Da Da Ra Dir Da Dir Da Ra Da Da Ra Da Da Ra
The above method was considered to be highly scientific, simple, and well suited to instrumental music. Hence it became extremely popular in North India and in effect it got the stamp of Maseet Khani gat.

Da Dir Da Ra Da Dir Da Ra
Da Dir Dir Da RDa SR Da

This tukra got the name of Raja Khani Gat.

The gat presentations were developed with intelligent and full use of different bol patterns forming beautiful gats.

Noted Maseet Khani style players during 19th century are Bahadur Khan, Ustad Dulhe Khan, Gulam Hassain, Muglu Khan, Pan Khan. The Razakhani gat players were perfect in playing Thumriang ragas namely Pilu, kafi Khamaj, Tilak Kamol, Bhairavi Important among razakhani gat players were :- Gulam Raza Khan, Ali Raza Khan, Panna Lal Vijpeyi, Babu Ishwari Parsad, Barkat Ali Khan, Saijaad Muhammed etc. Their gats are still of highest acclaim.

In recent times some other strokes of mizrab have developed which are used in NOMTOM Ka Alap while playing on sitar. For example :-

1. Dhi-na-na will be played as Da Ra Da.
2. Dhi-na-na-Dhi na-na-Dhi-na- will be played as Da Ra Da Da Ra Da Da Ra
3. Tak-Dhi-lang shall be played by mizrab as Dir Di-Ra-Ra.”32
So we see there are no set rules for mizraab strokes. With the change of time, so many alterations are being made by the great masters. The important and only thing to be considered while making bols is time & rhythm.

3.6 Care of the Instrument

Sitar is a very delicate instrument. A great care is needed for its handling. The old gurus worshipped the veena or other alike instruments, because they were of the opinion that Ma-saraswati is the Goddess of Sangeet, who is called ‘veena vadini’ also.

They kept the musical instrument in one separate room along with the statue or photograph of Ma saraswati. They lit Dhoop-Deep in that room. Though every one can’t afford to have separate room for the musical instruments or say sitar, but there are some of the things very necessary for the care of the sitar.

I visited some of the workshops where the sitar makers do this art work and I was informed the following points :-

1. For the long life of Jawari, small piece of paper should be kept on it. So that when we don’t play sitar then the Jawari is covered and no dust particles gather on it. In this way, we don’ts need to change it every month.

2. The use of mustard oil on strings is done for the smooth running of the fingers, but the excess is harmful s it will reach the bridge and spoil the voice of the sitar. To save the bridge from being spoiled,
the right way is to clean the oil from the strings with cotton or piece of soft cloth.

3. The gourd of sitar is the most delicate of all the parts. If it is hit by something it can break or the voice of the sitar is spoiled, so the sitar should be kept intact in a box before use and after use. The sitar should not be exposed for long to sun rays.

"It should not be stored near radiators heaters, air conditioners or windows.

4. Do not subject the sitar to drastic and abrupt temperature.

I just want to tell what happened when I was to give a sitar recital in Saskatoon and Abbotsford in Canada. The maximum temperature was 350 and -650 respectively. So I had a great difficulty in taking my sitar to the theatre. I wrapped my sitar first in plastic bag, then in blanket, then put it in the box. But when I took it out of the box, it was as cool as ice. I sat in an airconditioned room, where after an hour my sitar became O.K. So one should be very careful about the handling of the instrument.

5. When we are not playing it, it should be kept in a substantial cloth bag, that will cover the entire instrument. It is a good idea to have a plastic bag made which will cover the cloth bag and keep out any moisture.

6. The sitar should be kept either lying on the floor (frets facing up) or propped in a corner (frets facing towards the corner).
7. “Sitar is such a finely made instrument that it needs a great care about each of its parts. Periodically, the tension of the strings should be relaxed. The strings should be loosen but not slacked.

The sitar should be kept clean and dust free. A clean cloth can be used for wiping the exposed surfaces of the instrument. A one inch wide point brush with two or three inches bristles is very convenient for dusting under the strings and both bridges.”33
References:

4. Ibid.
6. Ameer Khusro - Dawalrani Khijri.
22. Sharangdeva - Sangeet Ratnakar, p.73.
27. Dev Vrat Chaudhary - Sitar and its techniques, p.49.
28. Sharmistha Sen - String instruments of North India, pp.53-54.
32. Bhagwat Sharan Sharma - Sitar Malika, p.34.
Illustrations
THE INVENTOR OF SEMTAAR
AMIR KHUSRO

PLATE - 1
THE SITAR - ORIGIN FROM EK TANTRI TO PRESENT.

Evolution of the Sitar from Indigenous Prototypes

PLATE - 2.
PARTS OF SITAR

- Big Khunties
- Small Khunties
- Pardas
- Daand
- Taar Gahani
- Re
- Ga
- Ma
- Sa
- Ni
- Na
- Pa
- Dha
- Sa
- Re
- Ga

Eleven Tarabs
Toomba
Tabli
Keel or Langot

PLATE 4
SITTING POSITIONS.

PLATE - 6.
THE CONSTRUCTION OF MIZRAAB.

Fig. 2

PLATE - 7.
CORRECT WAY OF DEFLECTING THE STRING FOR A MEEND.

INCORRECT WAY OF DEFLECTING THE STRING FOR A MEEND.

PLATE - 9.
1. Six Stringed Ukulele
   from UKAE Museum
2. Four Stringed Banjo
   from Candela
3. Four Stringed Guitar
   from Philippines
4. Eleven Stringed Candura
   from Werden
5. Four Stringed
   (No name)
   from Palestine

PLATE-10
6. Koto from Japan.
   Two Stringed.
7. Mendoline from N. America.
   Eight Stringed.

8. Boat Harp
   from Kenya.
   Five Strings of Satin

9. Four Stringed from Thailand
10. Five Stringed from Tanzania
CHAL THAAT SITAR
(MOVABLE FRETS)

PLATE - 13.