CHAPTER V

"SITAR GHARANAS"

5.1 Meaning of Gharana

5.2 Origin or Birth of ‘Gharana’

5.3 Changing Vaadan Shailis of Different Gharanas of Sitar

5.4 Gats of Different Shailies in Different Beats.
5.1 Meaning of Gharanas:

In Bengali Language, this word means ‘born of’ or belonging to or relating to a family.

According to the late Bimla Kant Roy Chaudhary (Sitarist and musicologist) the word ‘Ghar’ means, guni-bangsha prampra. This last word means the regular line of succession of family having sound skill of music.

Some take ‘Gharana’ as Hindi word meaning family in the broad sense of the word. But when we talk about music gharanas, it is talking about ‘Prampara’ of one family. The Prampara includes:

1. Continuity for generations
2. Particular location links
3. Individual style.
4. Musicians enrich the tradition with efforts.

So we see it takes a long way to be called a ‘Gharana’. In order to come into existence, the same style of music must be maintained by the family of musicians for at least three generations.

5.2 Origin of Gharana:

Indian music has crossed a long journey. It has seen best and worst times. It has been appreciated at one place by some and disliked at another place by the others. Whichever style it might have adopted, there were definitely some gurus and shishyas to teach and learn.
'Gharana' means Guru Shishya Prampra. This word has been in use since a long period. Gharana had different words used for it:-

1. Branch
2. School
3. Geeti
4. Vaani
5. Mat etc.

Shiv-mat, Brahm mat were the great traditional institutions of dance.

Existence of a gharana:

Every Gharana has its own traditions and techniques which are continued from generation to generation and every technique is referred to as vaadan shaily. In each gharana, there are some specific Ragas and Bandishen, which make it famous for their 'Baaj' or 'Chal'.

In sitar gharanas, every artist has his own 'style' or 'baaj' or vaadan shaily or 'vidhi'. These shailies were called "Gharanas". The specific gayan, vaadan or nritya shailies were having their own 'Gharanas' named after the vocalists instrumentalists and dancers.

These gharans have been keeping our art alive and we are lucky enough to have the traditional music with us. In sitar gharanas, the vocal classical music had great effect. The sitar vaadan shaily was started with the base of vocal music. From the very beginning of 14th century, the
classical vocal music played a great role in the invention of new styles in instrumental music. It has gone through so many hands that new techniques & baaj vidhies came into existence. So ‘Gharaana’ is a compound of social feature (the membership) and cultural one (musical style) Gharana is a family tradition, a lineage of hereditary musicians, their disciples and particular musical style they represent.

Historically, musical families became ‘Gharana’s as a result of patronage. They are the real custodians of the cultural heritage of Indian music. In this role, they have not only preserved our traditional music, in its original beauty and glory, but also have enriched it with artistry. A ‘Gharana’ usually comprises of a line of hereditary musicians who are referred to as the ‘Khandaan’. Their style of music is known as “Khandaani cheez” also.

The ‘Khandaan’ forms an inner circle, this may include special ‘gats’, toraas and techniques. In the ‘Khandaan’ tradition, the owner gives the lessons to a favourite disciple only or to his family members.

The particular aesthetic which shows the bol with laya, is the foundation of several systems of sitar baaj. The ancient sanskrit texts formulated rules which were later on adopted by other musicians. In the classical period (600-500 B.C.) references to four principal schools of music are found. They were called ‘Sampardayas’. Here may be detected the origin of ‘Gharanas’ of the present century.

The next phase of development was reached with the emergence
of "Geetis" i.e. songs rendered to different varmas etc. Then these vaanis or geetis gradually assimilated into Dhrupad, Khayal and instrumental music. These vaanis then were employed by the beenkaars, which are used even today.

At the time when khayal was gaining ascendency, new trends developed in sitar playing. Khayal made it's impact on sitar vaadan. Maseet Khan, a direct descendant of Tansen adopted the sitar to the Dhrupad tradition. Later Raheemsen and Amritsen further developed this technique. But it was Imdad Khan who added some sympathetic strings and made this instrument richer in tone and fuller in sound. The use of embellishments became liberal and inayat Khan made further innovations and gave a new direction in playing sitar. Thus the ancient musical tradition has undergone many changes, the tradition of Vaanis, Geetis as also the Guru Shishya Parampara or the master disciple tradition form the basis of music gharanas in India.

5.3 Changing Vaadan Shailies of different Gharanas of Sitar

With the establishment of Muslim rule in North India, Indian music developed quickly in a direction though there was not a complete rupture with the tradition inherited from the past.

In the 14th century, the status of music was gaining popularity. Many ragas and instruments were invented. sitar is listed in one of those instruments.

18th Century :— During the reign of Muhammed Shah Rangeele,
(1719-1748) music received extensive patronage. There are several
versions and opinions regarding different styles of sitar playing, but it
would be commonly accepted that the crystallization of the ‘gats’ or
‘Bandish’ on sitar took place during the later half of the 18th century.
it may be significant to mention that at this stage, the followers of Tansen
were divided into two main streams, one of Beenkaars and the other of
Rababiyas. The Beenkaars gave importance to ‘Swara’ presentation while
the Rababiyas laid stress on ‘Laya’ in their presentations.

Sitar absorbed the use of both Swara and Laya, no doubt based
on Dhrupad style of vocal music. This was the era when Maseet-Khani-
gats in vilambit teen taals were played on sitar. Tracing further
development of gats, we come across the names of Raheemsen, who
developed ‘sitar’ into a versatile and highly effective instrument during
the 18th century. Dhrupad ang was used. Apart from gats in teen taal,
several gats were composed in Thaptal as well. Small meands were
also performed. Maseet-Khaani baaj was being developed principally
in Delhi, Jaipur, Alwar etc. where as another style known as Razakhani
baaj was gaining popularity and was being developed in Lucknow, Kashi
and Jaunpur. Raza Khan-actually one of the Principal student of Maseet
Khan developed this style in sitar vaadan.

Whilst the Maseet Khani baaj has certain amount of dignity and
depth, the Razakhani style has a unique beauty of Laykaari.

Important Maseet Khani gat players were Bahadur Khan, son of
Maseet Khan, Ustad Dulhe Khan of Jaipur, Gulam Hussain Khan of Delhi and Pan Khan of Mathura.

The famous Raza Khani gat players of that period were Gulam Raza Khan, Pannalal Vijpayi, Babu Ishwari Prasad, Barkat Ali Khan, Gulam Mohammed etc.

Another style which flourished was Firoj Khani style, but it was overpowered by Maseet-Khani and Raza Khani gats. The Firoj Khani gats started from 9th matra, first line (Sthai) ended on a note of middle octave and the second line started from the same note.

19th century: It would be no exaggeration to say that this period was the golden period for popularity of sitar. The stylistic evolution of sitar reached greater heights in this period. Amrit Sen, a famous sitaria introduced a technique of gat-toraa, and the use of ‘Tihai’ was introduced in this period by great sitar Maestro Ustaad Inayat Khan. Ustaad Imdad Khan and Ustaad Barkatulla Khan introduced ‘Jhala’ technique in sitar vaadan. The use of both hands was equal, rather the left hand started creating melody and gradually started being more active, the more swaras the more mizraab strokes.

The complete performance of sitar included, Alaap, Jor-allap, gats (both) toraas of both gats and then finally the Jhala. Centres like Jaipur, Delhi, Gwalior, Alwar, Rewa, Baroda, Jaunpur, Lucknow, Rampur etc. became the focal points of sitar playing.

20th Century: Many of the rulers had their own musical courts and they themselves were sometime good musicians. So these courts
preserved and developed within, the Gharanas of North India; Lucknow, Jaunpur, Gwalior etc.

Generally, a sitarist learns a baaj and then uses it to interpret the music, he or she has learnt from a Gharana artist. It indicates a particular gharana of which the baaj is.

The famous sitar Gharanas and shailies, which have been prevalent in India are as follows:

1. Gwalior — Gulam Alikhan (Haddu Khan’s Sarod shaily)
2. Jaipur — Tansen’s Senia Gharana (Sen Vanshiya shaily)
3. Vishnupur — Mixed vaadan shaily
4. Indore Gharana — Mixed vaadan sialy (Ustaad Babu Khan)
5. Etawa Gharana — Imdad Khani Shaily.
6. Maihar (Rampur Gharana Ustaad Alaudin Khan’s vaadan shaily.

1. Gwalior Gharana :- This was started by Haddu Khan. In this lineage are Wahid khan, Maraad khan, Gulaam Khan, Lalit Khan, Rais Khan and Abdul Haleem Zaafar Khan etc. These ustaads never made any notations and hence we are deprived off the precious art which they had. They gave lessons to few of their disciples.

2. Jaipur Sitar Gharana or Senia Gharana :- The city of Jaipur was founded in seventeenth century. In the year 1739, Senia musicians left Delhi because of the Darbaar of Mohammed Shah fell and they sought the patronage of Rajput courts in Jaipur. These musicians were
descendants of senia Beenkaar Maseet Khan who according to the history of Indian Music developed the first classical sitar baaj. Maseet Khan’s great grandson Raheemsen developed Dhrupad shaily which had been started by Tansen Maseet Khan was the first to have given the instrument the status of a mature classical solo instrument. Senia Gharana introduced the following rules and made some of the changes:—

1. Maseet Khan made Maseet Khaani gat in Vilambit laya (A gat is a short musical form consisting of a rhythmical pattern based on the strokes of mizraab.

2. Raza Khan made Raza Khani gats or Drut Gats which were made beautiful with toraas and Jhala.

3. Sukh Chain was perfect in Allap Chaari. He played the alaap & Jhala on sitar for hours and hours together with meend work.

4. Raheemsen added Beenkari ang in sitar vaadan.

5. Amrit Sen put the same technique sitar vaadan, and with the help of his father, he started playing khayal-ang-in sitar.

6. Nihalsen was another sitarist in senia Gharana, who started the tarb string work on sitar.

There have been so many artists in Senia Gharana, who continued to develop this art of music. Ustad Ameer Khan, Ustad Barktullah khan, Ustad Imdad Khan, Ashiq Ali Khan, Mushtak Ali Khan, are the famous ones.
The Sen Vanshiya artists are strict enough not to play any other gharana’s ‘Bandishes’. They believe in the sweet melody of the raga. Amrit Sen had his favourite disciples: Nihalsen, Ameer Khan and Ustaad Imdad Khan. Imdad Khan started his own gharana. The Jaipur Sitar baaj is depicted in Debu Chaudhary’s book “Sitar and it’s techniques.” The meend work is given much more importance in this baaj.

3. Imdad Khani Gharana:— His father Sahebdad Khan was a great sitarist. Imdad Khan followed his father’s food steps by developing the meend, ghaseet and jhala work in sitar. Imdad Khan’s son, Inayat Khan and Vaheed Khan made the gats, jor alaap and then the gats were played with toraas. His disciple Vilayat Khan continued this shaily: Vilayat Khan’s vaadan includes strong mizraab strokes, and difficult toraas. Imdad Khan lived in Calcutta for about 20 years where he continued his riyaaz of sitar. Arvind Parikh (Ustaad Alaudin Khan’s disciple) was a great sitarist.

From this very gharana, the great sitar players, Shujat Khan and Nishaat Khan are continuing the work. The other great sitarist from Imdad Khani gharana is Budhaditya Mukherjee from Bhilai. Both Shujaat Khan and Budhaditya Mukherjee play gayaki ang on sitar. Shujaat Hussain Khan’s vaadan shaily has sweetness of sound. He sings while playing on sitar. He plays spaat taans with great perfection. His Jhala work is so beautiful even in fastest speed, he has the control over swaras, laya and tall that the audience remains spell bound. When interviewed
at Rose Garden Kala Bhawan, Sector 16, Chandigarh, he said that he likes to play gayaki ang more. Budhaditya Mukerjee has learnt the sitar from his father and his vaadan shaily has also the gayaki and tantarkari in it. When interviewed he told me that though he belongs to Imdad khane gharana and has adopted that shaily, even then he has his own inventions also which he keeps adding. He likes fast tempo gats. Meend work in alaap is his perfection. He stressed in the interview that he has learnt from his father who is from Imdadi gharana and in this vaadan shaily there is a mixture of Tantakari & gayaki ang in his vaadan shaily.

4. Alaudin Khan’s Rampur Gharana:— Late Alaudin Khan was the lessons from Muhammed Vajeer Khan of Tansen’s Vansh. His son ustaad Ali Akbar Khan became a famous Sarodia. He taught his vaadan shaily to Pt. Ravi Shankar who is his son-in-law and is at the heights of fame.

Pt. Ravi Shankar’s sitar vaadan shaily has all the qualities which can depict every human mind, seasonal effect, birds chirping, flow of the rivers, roar of the sea and cloud, with the powers of his fingers. He popularised ‘Dhuns’ on sitar based on folk melodies. He has made this instrument a must in almost every song. Kramatulla Khan is another great sitarist who took his music education from his father Nayamatulla Khan. Though he was a Sarodia, but his son mixed the sarod vaadan in sitar and it became a new vaadan shaily which gave birth to a new technique.

Now a days, the artist does not have any compulsion as to which
gharana he should adopt. One can mix more than one gharanedaar gats and toras and a new style takes place.

5. **Indore Gharana** :— This famous gharana was founded by Ustaad Babu Khan. “Abdul Haleem Zafar born in 1927 in Jawra is also from same gharana. He uses kan swara in his sitar vaadan with great perfection. The other techniques remain the same as other artists use. He gives free sitar vaadan in film sangeet.” The gharanas can be kept alive only by hard working artists and who are to become professionals. The gharana is the institution which over the past 400 years has acted as the custodian of the heritage of North Indian classical music. These schoos exhibit a strong degree of stylistic homogeneity vis-a-vis-baaj and chaal.

Now a days only two types of gats (Bandish) compositions of sitar are prevalent namely Maseet Khani and Razakhani.

The Maseet Khani gat invariably uses the following set of bots :

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5.4 Gats of different shailies in different beats.

**Rag Gujari Todi of Amrit Sen**

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**Notes:**
- `Sthai`: The Sthai gat is played with the following notes: `Dha Ni Sa i t SaSa Ni`.
- `Da Ra Dir`: The Da Ra Dir gat is played with the following notes: `DaRa Da Ra`.
- `Antra`: The Antra gat is played with the following notes: `SaRe SaRe Re Re Sa`.
- `Da Dir Da Ra`: The Da Dir Da Ra gat is played with the following notes: `DaDir DaDa Ra Ra-2`.

**Rag Gujari Todi**

- `Sthai`: `DhaNi Sa Maga MaMa DaDir DaDir Da Ra`
- `DaRa Dir Da Ra`: `DaRa Da Ra`
### Maseet Khani Gat in teen taal 16 beats 4 + 4 + 4 + 4
(Raga Vilas khani Todi)

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**Sthai:**

- Sthai: SaRe Ni SaSa Ga Ma
- Da Dir Da Ra
- Ga MaMa Pa Ma Ga Re Sa
- Da Da Ra Dir Da Dir Da Ra Da Da Ra
- Antra: MaMa Ga MaMa Dha Ni
- Da Dir Da Ra
- GaMa Ni SaSa Re Sa Ni Dha Pa
- Da Da Ra Dir Da Dir Da Ra Da Da Ra
- Ni Dha Pa MaMa Ga MaPa Ma Ga Re Sa
- Da Da Ra Dir Da Dir Da Ra Da Da Ra

**Rag Desh:** Ustaad Imdad Khan Sahib

**Sthai:**

- 0 Sa ReRe Re Ma — Pa Ma Pa
- Da Dir Da Ra — Da Da Ra
- 0 Dha Pa Da Pa Pa Ma MaMa Ga Re
- + Re NiNi Dha Ni Dha Ni Pa Dha
- 0 Ma Pa DhaDha PaPa Ma MaGa —Ga Re—
- + Re PaPa Pa Ma Ga Re Ga Ga
Antra:

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Raza Khani Gat in Rag Bhupali Teen-taal - 16 beats 4 + 4 + 4 + 4

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Sthai:—

| Ga | S | Gr | Re | Ga | PaPa | Dha | Pa |
| Da | S | Da | Ra | Da | Dir | Da | Ra |
| Ra | ReRe | Ga | Ga | Pa | PaPa | Dha | Pa |
| Da | Dir | Da | Ra | Da | Dir | Da | Ra |

DaDir Da Ra Da RDa SR Da

Antra:—

| Ga | GaGa | Pa | Dha | Sa | S | S | Sa |
| Da | Dir | Da | Re | Da | S | Da | Ra |

Se ReRe Ga | Re | Sa | ReRe | Sa | Sa |

Dr Dir Da Re Da Dir Da Ra | Ga | ReRe | Sa | Dha | Re | SaSa | Dha | Pa |

Da Dir Da Ra Da Dir Da Ra GaPaPa DhaDha PaPa Ga | GaRe | SRe | Sa | DaDir DaRa |

Da Dir Dir Da RDa SR Da |
Raza Khani (Raag Bilashkani Tori) in different beats.

Ek-Taal 12 beats - 2 + 2 + 2 + 2 + 2 + 2

Re Ga Dha Ni Komal Swaras

X

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

Sthai:- Ga Ga Ga Re Re Sa Sa Re Re Re Ni Ni Ni

Da Dir Da Re Da Ra Da Dir Da Dir Da Ra

Antra:- Dha Dha Da Ma MaMa Ga Ga Pa Pa Pa Dha Dha Dha Sa Sa

Da Dir Da Dir Da Ra Da Dir Da Dir Da Ra

Re Re Re Ni Ni Ni Dha Pa Ma MaMa Ga Re Re Sa Sa

Da Dir Da Dir Da Ra Da Dir Da Dir Da Ra

Raza Khani (Raag Bilashkani Tori) in different beats.

Ek-Taal 12 beats - 2 + 2 + 2 + 2 + 2 + 2

Re Ga Dha Ni Komal Swaras

X

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

Sthai:- Ga Ga Ga Re Re Sa Sa Re Re Re Ni Ni Ni

Da Dir Da Re Da Ra Da Dir Da Dir Da Ra

Antra:- Dha Dha Da Ma MaMa Ga Ga Pa Pa Pa Dha Dha Dha Sa Sa

Da Dir Da Dir Da Ra Da Dir Da Dir Da Ra

Re Re Re Ni Ni Ni Dha Pa Ma MaMa Ga Re Re Sa Sa

Da Dir Da Dir Da Ra Da Dir Da Dir Da Ra
### Rag-Bilaskhani Todi

**Raza Khani Gat in Taal-Rupak - 7 beats 3 + 2 + 2**

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So we see that during the 20th century or the present period, sitar vaadan shailies have achieved a lot and as change is the law of nature, vaadan shailies of sitar have gone through vast changes. Dhrupad based compositions of earlier period are gradually being replaced by Khayal based compositions. Both Maseet Khani and Razakhani gats have undergone quite some changes which are:

1. The laya of Maseet Khani gat has been increased. It is played just like slow tempo khayal singing is done.

2. In the modern period RazaKhani gats, the use of the bols is almost non-existent as most of the gats are based on khayal Bandish and are presented in the gayaki ang style.

3. The use of left hand has increased considerably along with the right hand movements. Meend, Kan Swara, Murki, Khatka, gamak, Krintan, zamzama etc. are extensively used in the development of the gats.

4. Alaap has gained the heights of popularity. Before the half of the 20th Century, it was given importance, not much time was given to swara-vistaar. But after 1950, the aalaap has become the main part of sitar vaadan, which introduces the raga to the audience and depicts its emotions and feelings. Along with the melodic and rhythmic development, aalaap has achieved great relative importance. Before 1950, The gats were thought to be the pivot around which the music presentation moved, in the context of a short aalaap, taans or toraas with
tihais with the beat of tabla and lastly the Jhala etc. have reduced the relative importance and the primary role of gats.

5. The bols of mizraab, starting of the gat, structure of formation of Vilambit & drut gats do not follow hard and fast rules. Though rhythm is the base of all music, but khayal gayaki has effected the Indian sitar vaadan shaily so much so that the artist is at his free will to play anything in any style at any time and to any limit of time. In earlier times i.e. upto the middle of the 19th century, gats had the pivotal role in sitar performances. They had the unique beauty of rhythm and emotions. There are sitar players, who can perform the gat vaadan for long time, but then the repetition of tihais after every toraa, spoils the beauty of the raga. Vaadan shailies of sitar have been going throughs many changes with the developed techniques of beautifying the performance and this process will continue with the change of artists and with the change of time.

Pt. Gopal Krishan ji, a distinguished Vichitra Veena player told me in an interview at P.U. Chandigarh that he has adopted some of the techniques of sitar in his vaadan, and sitar has adopted veena vaadan shaily in many ways. He learnt this art from his father Pt. Nand Kishore Ji Gopal Ji told that alaap of sitar has been taken from vichitra veena.

In 1977, I was invited to attend one seminar on “Sangeet Ate Usda Gurbaani Te Parbhav” in Central State Library Sector 17, Chandigarh which was arranged by Dr. Sr. Nirender Singh Virdi of Jallandhar, I had a chance to ask so many questions about sitar which was my subject
of teaching. He told me that sitar has adopted alaap of veena and it is the child of veena (Tri-tantri veena). Vichitra Veena is the developed roop of tritantri veena. Slow gats look graceful on veena, where as sitar shines in both vilambit and drut gats. In modern sitar vaadan shailis, gayaki-ang and Tantri-ang have taken a great place. The credit of this type of vaadan shaily goes to Imdaad Khan & Vilayat Khan. They have brought the sitar very close to the human voice.

Budhaditya Mukerjee when interviewed at Bhartiya Vidya Bhawan October’95, Sector 27, Chandigarh told that sitar has vast techniques to be learnt. Vilayat Khan Sahib’s style of jor has been adopted by the young artists. Now a days khayals are played on sitar and heard by the audience with great pleasure.

Pt. Ravi Shankar ji is the most celebrated musician of our country today. He has enriched the sitar by introducing the vaadan shailis of vocal music & other instruments just as sarod. He has made so many ragas with mishrit swaras i.e. he mixed too to three ragas and then originated one new raga. He has mastery over every tala.

Nikhil Banerji has contributed a lot in the field of sitar vaadan. He has given such gats which were woven with Khayal gayaki ang.

Another noted sitar player Muushtaq Ali Khan basis his compositions on Maseet Khani and Razakhani styles. He maintains the purity of the tradition and plays the gats always in Teentaal because he is a firm believer in the old tradition of mizraab bols. He prefers to
play the raga in Dhrupad ang. He renders the raga in veena technique i.e. his compositions include – Alaap, Vilambit gat, Madya gat which includes all the sitar techniques and the fourth stage Drut gat and then Jhala. Towards the end of the 18th century, Ustaad Imdad Khan made revolutionary changes in sitar vaadan shaily by introducing new techniques. He mad some new bols of mizraab, which were used while playing gayaki ang on sitar. Pt. Ravi Shankar started playing both alaap and gat todas on sitar. Previously the alaap was played on sur-bahar. New experiments will introduce more techniques and more new changed vaadan shailis will be produced by the great artists.

References:

2. Sharmistha Sen — String Instruments of North India, p.67.
3. Sharmistha Sen — String Instruments of North India, p.76.
4. Collected from Late Dr. Sagar Pandit. (Retd.) Head of the Deptt. of Music, Maris Music College Shimla (H.P.).