Chapter-IV

Amir Khusrau’s Contribution Towards Hindustani Music intermingling of Persian and Hindustani Classical Raags (Melodies) and Instruments.

Since the development of society music remained a food for the soul of human being. In earlier times its ultimate source was nature but with the development of Vedic Age we had one full Veda dedicated to salvation through Music and Art i.e. (Samveda). Since then the Indian music is having a constant process of development and innovations. Its advanced present status had observed many changes time to time. What was at first, one and the same developed into apparently two separate schools or systems of music known by the names of the Hindustani or Northern school and Karnataki or Southern School

A general perception about the history of music indicate that the soul of Indian music is still preserved with the Karnataki style. as the

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1 Prof. S.H. Askari, Amir Khusrau as a Historian Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, Patna, p- 152.
area of south remained indifferent towards the advent of foreigners. The Karnataki was more immune from the exotic as compared to the Hindustani which had the Persian influence over it, brought to the Indian soil by the Muslims. This matter remained disputed among musicians and historians and Mr. Alain Danielou questioned the eminence of the foreign culture and denied altogether the Persian influence on Northern Indian music.

"The oft repeated assumption that Northern music evolved under Persian influence is obviously meaningless for one can vainly search in Persia and the whole of the middle east for anything which could justify the possibility". On the grounds of some assumptions we could not agree to any of these statements as the development of Hindustani music as well as of Arabo persian music was not a matter of few years but a matter of centuries. The musical system upon which the Indian “Classical music” of today is based, appears to be even more limited than the medieval one. It has up to a slight extent modified its form under influences from outside.

This amalgamation or exchange of theories, literature, sound was quiet obvious as per the nature of artists, i.e. "the lust for some

2 Prof. S.H. Askari, Amir Khusrau as a Historian p- 152.
innovation to become sublime”. But then the socio political situations limited their musical theory and confused all the points that dealt with musical forms unknown to them\(^1\). As a result to this, the theory and concepts of sound which were to be dealt with utmost care, remained untouched. Theories worked for the description of musical system only. For the very same purpose. The modern works of music if explain something of medieval era there appears, an invisible gap. We get through a system in which some of its features are quite distinct from the medieval one\(^2\). This all might be as music was considered a patent matter of a particular class of society since ages.

As a change of trend the era of Sultans in India was marked with a phase of Bhakti and Sufism and both these philosophies introduced music to the commoners also\(^3\). No doubt the royal courts patronised the master musicians for the praise of Princes and Kings, but at the same time masses also relished it. This provided momentum to the innovations in music and musical instruments. Temples and shrines, and all sacred places were thronged with devotees who were all absorbed in that class of music called the “Devotional Music” night and day\(^4\).

\(^{2}\) Ibid, p- 19.
Music was handed down traditionally in certain families in which almost all the male members were able to play and sing. In the series we are having the mighty men like Naik Gopal, Naik Baijoo, Taansen, Amir Khusrau, Mir Nasin Ahmad Dehlavi etc., springing up from the unknown and stirring the very forces of nature by their extraordinary performances\(^1\).

Before analysing the contribution of Khusrau to Indian Music it is essential to trace out the advent of artistic and spiritual taste of Muslim migrants to India. The estimation of Maulvis and Ulemas, music was an area of art to be left out but Sufi like Sheikh Junaid Bagdadi considered it a path to the destination of God. To dance, sing, play and becoming emotional in love of God, he weighs equal to a religious conduct\(^2\).

On some parallel grounds, Salman Parsi (a shia thinker) declared “God is without form and hence human being could get him only by love and devotion”\(^3\). Though the Sufis indirectly adopted the music and poetry of the Bhakti philosophy of Hinduism and gave place to qawwals in their Khanqahs but in the parameters of Islamic culture\(^4\).

This was very well known to the rulers as well as to the Sufis of that time. A proper balance was maintained between the Maulavis and

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2 Ibid, p- 12.
4 Ibid, p- 16.
Sufis by the contemporary Sultans and they used both whenever needed. By the life of Khusrau we get through the similar concept— "Three of the patrons of Khusrau Jalaluddin Khilji, Qutubuddin Khilji and Ghiyassuddin Tuqhaq were the opponents of his Guru Nizamuddin Auliya but all three of them praised and honoured Khusrau. Neither Khusrau nor Auliya criticised them. Neither Khusrau left their services and nor he was asked by Auliya to do so it manifested tolerance of the highest order." \(^1\)

To elaborate the contribution of Khusrau to words music, it could be categorised into three sections.

1. Mystic and musical writings.
2. Invention of new ragas.
3. Invention of musical instruments.

**Mystic and Musical Writings:**

Khusrau carried out the ornate tradition of musical forefathers. He had rare privilege of benefitting from cultural currents and cross currents, of two civilizations, under the kindly encouragement of his noble and distinguished maternal grand father Imad ul Mulk\(^2\). He relished the opportunities of his life and widened his area of innovations

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in each and every field by the sublime ancestral traits partially and the devotional blessings of Auliya in majority.

Khusrau had number of outstanding luminaries of musical field as his contemporaries like Abdul-Momin, Barbad\(^1\) etc. He constantly, remained in touch with the traditions exalted by poet musicians and musician poets. And also with the creative works of theorists\(^2\) of music. In his work Izaz-i-Khusravi\(^3\) he made the mention of contemporary music and musicologists. Same as his literary compositions which were nurtured by Auliya his musical bent also found shelter at the Khanqah of Auliya, where the mystic Qwallis were devoted to Allah every day.

**Qawwali** : is the devotional music of the Sufis. Originally performed mainly at Sufi Shrines throughout what is now India and Pakistan. It has also gained popularity in the mainstream, especially through the work of artists Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan. It is a vibrant musical tradition that stretches back more than 700 yrs.

**Origin** : Qawwali in the form we know it today was essentially created by Amir Khusrau in the late 13th century in India. Amir Khusrau of the Chishti order of Sufis is credited with fusing the Persian and

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2. Ibid, p- 81.
South Asian musical tradition, to create Qawwali as well as the Hindustani Classical music tradition. The word Sama is used (or is the preffered name) in Central Asia and Turkey, for it forms very similar to Qawwali. Mehfil-e-Sama is the formal name used for a session of Qawwali.

**Song Content:** The song which constitute the qawwali are mostly in Urdu and Punjabi, though there are also songs in Persian, Brajbhasha, Siraiki and Sindhi. The poetry is implicitly understood to be spiritual in its meaning. Even though the lyrics can sometimes sound wildly secular, or outright hedonistic. The central themes of qawwali are love, devotion and longing (of man for the Divine).

Qawwalis are classified by their content into several categories:

- A *hamd* is a song in praise of Allah, a qawwali starts with a hamd.

- A *naat* is a song in praise of the Prophet Muhammad. Hamd is traditionally followed by a naat.

- A *manqabat* is a song in praise of either Ali or one of the Sufi saints. Manqabats in praise of Ali are typically sung only at a Shia concert. If one is sung, it will follow right after the naat.
There is usually at least one manqabat in a traditional programme.

- A *marsiya* is a lamentation over the death of much of Ali’s family in the Battle of Karbala once again, this would typically be sung only at a Shia’s concert.

- A *ghazal* is a song that sounds secular on the face of it. There are two extended metaphors that run through ghazals. The joys of drinking and the agony of separation from the beloved. These songs feature exquisite poetry, and can certainly be taken at face value, and enjoyed at that level. In fact, in India and Pakistan Ghazal is also a separate, distinct musical genre. In which many of the same songs are performed in a different musical style and in a secular context. In the context of that genre, the songs are usually taken at face value. No deeper meaning is necessarily implied. But in the context of qawwali, these songs of intoxication and yearning use secular metaphors to poignantly express the Soul’s longing for union with the Divine, and its joy in loving the Divine. In the songs of intoxication, “Wine” represents “knowledge of the Divine”, the “Cupbearer” (Saqi) is God or a spiritual guide, the “Tavern” is the metaphorical place where the soul may (or may not) be fortunate enough to attain spiritual
enlightenment. Intoxication is attaining spiritual knowledge, or being filled by the joy of loving the Divine. In the songs of yearning, the soul, having been abandoned in this world by that cruel and cavalier lover, God, sings of the agony of separation and the depth of its yearning for reunion.

**Composition of a qawwali party:**

A group of qawwali musicians, called a party, typically consists of eight or nine members including a lead singer, one or two side singers, one or two musical instruments. If there is only one percussionist, he plays the tabla and dholak, usually the tabla with the left hand and the dholak with the right. Often there will be two percussionists, in which case one might play the tabla and the other the dholak. There is also a chorus of four or five men who repeat key verses, and who aid and abet percussion by hand clapping.

The performers sit in two rows—the lead singer, side singers and harmonium players in the front row, and the chorus and percussionists in the back row. Before the fairly recent introduction of the harmonium, qawwalis were usually accompanied by the sarangi.

**Musical Structure:**

Songs are usually between 15 to 30 minutes long. However the longest commercially released qawwali runs slightly over 115 minutes
(Hanshr Ke Roz Yeh poochhunga by Aziz Mian Qawwal). The qawwali maestro Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan has at least two songs that are more than 60 min. long. Qawwalis tend to begin gently and build steadily to a very high energy level in order to induce hypnotic states both among the musicians and within the audience. Songs are usually arranged as follows:

1. They start with an instrumental prelude where the main melody is played on the harmonium, accompanied by the tabla, and which may include improvised variations of the melody.

2. Then comes the alap, a long tonal improvised melody during which the singers in tone different long notes, in the raag of the songs to be played.

3. The lead singer begins to sing some preambles verses which are typically not part of the main song, although thematically related to it. These are sung unrhymically, improvised following the raag and accompanied only by the harmonium. After the lead singer sings a verse, one of the side singers will repeat the verse perhaps with his own improvisation. A few or many verses will be sung in this way leading to the main song.

4. As the main song begins, the tabla dholak and clapping begins. All members join the singing of the verses that constitute the refrain.
Normally neither the lyrics of the main verses nor the melodies that go with them are improvised. Infact these are often traditional songs sung by many groups, especially within the same lineage. As the song proceeds, the lead singer or one of the side singers may break out into an alap. The song usually builds in tempo and passion with each singer trying to outdo the other in terms of vocal acrobatics. Some singers may do long periods of sargam improvisation, especially alternating improvisation, with a student singer. The songs usually end suddenly.

Nizamuddin Auliya distinkted music into four parts:

1. Halal (worship of God)
2. Nabab (Towards God)
3. Makroob (worldly)
4. Haram (of sensuous nature)

The later two of them he considered unwanted. As Khusrau was disciple of Auliya in particular he introduced the religious songs of Islam or the qawallis devoted to the love of Allah. He created divine musical poetry that reached out to truth. His interest in Indian ragas created mesmeric blends of Arabic and Iranian compositions.

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The Crux of Sufism or Islamic mysticism lies in the notion of the soul’s exile from its Maker and its longing in the face of other attractions to return and loose itself in Him. This all makes love essential towards God and the elimination (fana) of the self for merger (wiaal) in God as the aim and object of that love\(^1\). This attitude and ideology was depicted in the musical works of Khusrau. “Khusrau raain Suhaag ki jaagi pee ke sang, Tan Mero man Piyu ko, dou bhaye ek rang”\(^2\).

In all the sufic poetry the central theme is love, 12th century Sufi poet Rumi also said, “I made a far journey, Earth’s fair cities to view. But like to the love’s city, City none I knew”\(^3\). The Sufic message hidden in the Persian and Urdu poetry found down to earth and refreshing representation in the devotional poetry of the regional dialects of North India.

The popular Sufic order to which Khusrau’s Guru was a part i.e. the Chishti order, regarded music (sama) as a means to achieve mystic ecstasy. The origins of Sufic music which had become intimately linked to the folk tradition of devotional music of the Punjab, Braj and Awadh, is traditionally traced to Amir Khusrau\(^4\). Sufi poetry compiled even upto

\(^1\) Iqtidar Alam Khan, Internet, Sufic poetry and Music.
\(^2\) Dr. Chandrabhan Rawat, Amir Khusrau Kaa Sangeet Parak Hindi Kavya, p- 206.
\(^3\) Iqtidar Alam Khan, Internet, Sufic poetry and Music, Prof., Centre for Advanced Study in History, AMU, has been elected General President of Indian History Congress, Bangalore.
\(^4\) Ibid.
today forms a great unifying factor among hearts and boundaries. It forms an inalienable part of Indian tradition.

The earliest documentation of musical advances happened around the era of Amir Khusrau. He symbolizes the importing of middle-eastern Style in Indian music. From the Hindu religious songs (Bhajans) he borrowed the concept of directly addressing God. In prayer-song with many singers clapped efficiently in accompaniment as angels are believed to do when enlightened soul abode heaven. His music became immensely popular with Hindus and Muslims, receiving patronage in seven kings of both religions.

One example of his Persian rhyme and notes of a devotional song is as such,

"Khabaram raseed imshab ki nigaar khuahi aa mad;
Sar-eman fidaa-e raah-e ki sawaar khuahi aamad.
Ham-e aahwan-e sehra sar-e khud nihada bar kaf;
Ba-umeed aanki rozi bashikaar khuahi aamad.
Kashishi ki Ishq daarad naguzaradat badinsaa;
Ba-janazah gar nayai ba-mazaar khuahi aamad.
Balabam raseed jaanam fabiya ki zindah maanam;
Pas azan ki man na-maanam bacha kar khuahi aamad."

\[1\] Aakar Patel, Internet, My Millennium Man–Amir Khusro, editor Sunday Mid Day. (Musical nirvana com)
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1 Aakar Patel, Internet, My Millennium Man—Amir Khusro, editor Sunday Mid Day. (Musical nirvana com)
Translation by (A. Schimmel), “You carried the soul from (my)
body-and yet, you are still in the soul;
You have given pains—and are still the remedy;
Openly you split my breast yet you are still hidden in my heart.
You have destroyed the kingdom of my heart
With the sword of Coquetry,
And are still a ruler in that place.......”

Musical compositions and Music formed a distinct part of his life.
During the sama mehfils (musical sessions) at the Khankah of Hazrat
Nizamuddin, dancing was not permitted, but during one such
performances Khusrau stood up to dance. Hazrat requested him, “Dance
in such a way that your hands are raised to the sky as if calling to God,
and your feet should hit the earth as if denouncing it”.

It could be said, that his actions and works depicts a Sufi as a
follower, a supplicant, a beloved and a friend to the one he loved and
revered most—his God and his Guru Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya. When
Khusrau entered the Khanqah of Auliya for the very first time, deciding
it a right place for himself, in a happy and ecstatic mood he sang—

“Aaj rang hai hey maan rang hai ri,

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1 Internet, Excerpts from Khusrau’s Persian Poetry.
2 Harpreet Kaur, Internet, Soul Music, (“Music is the fire that burns the heart and the soul”
has rightly been interpreted by Amir Khusrau”).
Moray mehboob kay ghar rang hai ri,
Mohay pir paayo Nizamuddin Auliya"1.

While making a practical approach towards mixed language he sustained musicalness or rythemic endings, as—

Jargar Pisray chu maah para
Kuch ghadiye samariye, Pukara
Nakde dil man girfato shakist
Phir kuch na ghada na kuch sawara
(Son of a goldsmith like a piece of moon.
Asked to make something.
Taken my heart and broke it,
Since then nothing was formed or mended.)

These are some of the examples of his poetic compositions having the musical traits due to the presence of syllables and rythm.

"Invention of new Ragas"2:—

Khusrau was a versatile genius who turned to music. He raised it to such a parameter that remained unrivalled for about two centuries3.

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1 Harpreet Kaur, Internet, Soul Music, ("Music is the fire that burns the heart and the soul" has rightly been interpreted by Amir Khusrau").
2 Dr. Chandrabhan Rawat, Amir Khusrau Kaa Sangeet Parak Hindi Kavya. Amir Khusrau. (Bhavnatmak Ekta Ke Agradoot) edited by Dr. Malik Mohd., Rajpal and Sons Delhi, 1975, p- 203.
3 Shri Pada Bandyopadhyaya, The Evolution of Songs and Lives of Great Musicians, B. Mus., Vani Mandir Bhartiya Sangeet Sahitya Prakashan, Delhi, p- 44.
He had introduced many derivative melodies hitherto unknown to the system of Indian music by the combination of Persian and Indian ragas. He produced number of mixed ragas, a class of melodies known formerly as Sankerna ragas. Following ragas were said to be introduced by him:

1. Majir
2. Sazagiri
3. Yaman
4. Uhashag
5. Muwafique
6. Zilaf
7. Fargana
8. Sarpada
9. Bhakara
10. Firodos
11. Ghanam
12. Munam
13. Zangola

Ragas form the very heart of music. The melodic form upon which the artist or singer improvises his performance. A raag is a subtle and aesthetic melodic form with its own ascending and descending order consisting of either a full seven note, else six or five notes. Every raag is characterised by its own particular emotion. The acknowledged order of these nine sentiments is, romantic and erotic, humorous, pathetic, anger, heroic, fearful, disgust, amazement and peaceful. Each raag in addition to its distinguished mood, is also closely connected to a

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2. Ibid, p- 44.
4. Internet, Indian Classical Music, Literature.
particular time of day or a season of the year\(^1\). Thus through the rich melodic Indian music, every feeling of human heart & of nature, can be expressed and experienced.

Khusrau made his own contribution to the existing periphery. He certainly originated a separate style in music based on the Qual and Qualbana\(^2\) of the Islamic tradition. Different methods of presentation of the same Raag generally led to the formation of different styles which fragrance like the different flowers of a garden. He has claimed that he is capable of writing copiously and as much on music, as he has been able to produce in literature.

In his chapter on music in ‘Ijaz-e-Khusravi’ Khusrau shows intimate and comprehensive grasp of the technique of the vocal and instrumental music\(^3\). Other than the raag compositions he introduced some styles of singing such as : Qual, Qalbana, Qawwali, Khayal, Nigar, Baseet and Suheela\(^4\).

He has been also credited for inventing 24\(^5\) new rhythmic movements (Tals) in our music system.

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1 Internet, Indian Classical Music, Literature.
3 Raja Sultan Maqsood, Music: Khusrau the Innovator, Amir Khusrau critical studies national committee for 700th Anniversary of Amir Khusrau,1975, p- 83.
5 Ibid, p- 83.
In his Masnavi 'Nuh Sipihr' in which he praised India's superiority over various aspects as compared to the other countries, one aspect was music. He writes:

1. Our sweet melodies are like the fire which burns the hearts and the souls (mind).

2. Nothing in this world known to us is similar to this music. This is not hidden from anybody that there is no such thing in the whole world.

3. Many musicians came from every direction and they also brought with them their excellent styles.

4. All of them took up this fine art and the intelligent ones (Swift paced ones) amongst them (ran fast) learnt it quickly.

5. To some extent they acquired it and thus added something to their skill.

6. Although coming within the boundary of India they stayed here for more than 30 to 40 years.

7. Yet they had not the capacity to warm themselves up by a single soft sound on account of their cool temperament.

8. The 9th argument is that the arrow like swift soft sound strikes the heart of a wild antelope in such a way that it does not realise it. When it cannot overcome its unconsciousness, the arrow strikes it.
11. It becomes transfixed without the use of bow and arrow and that very moment it gives up its life on account of the musical stroke\(^1\).

This description in Nuh Siphr itself proved the knowledge and liking of Khusrau about the Indian music. Many scholars credit him for the mixing of Indian and Persian and inventing new ragas mentioned earlier. In the “Raag Darpan” of Fakirullah we get the following details about some combinations; as mentioned by Khusrau in Qiran-us-saadain.

1. Raag Muzir — Mixing of ‘Gara’ and one Persion Raga
2. Saazgiri — It is a mixture of Purvi, Gaura, Gun, Kali and one Persian raag.
3. Aimam — ‘Hindole’ is mixed with Persian raag ‘Nauroz’.
4. Usshaq — Combination of Saarang, Basant and one Persian Raag.
5. Muvalifq — Persian ‘Do Gaha Husaini’ was mixed with Todi and Malsari.
6. Ganam — Formed by a slight change in ‘Purvi’.
7. Zeelf — Khat raga was mixed with Persian raag shahnaz.

8. Fargana — 16 Indian ragas were mixed with one Persian.

9. Sar Pardah — Gaur, Saarang and Bilawal was mixed with Persian raag or Dhun (Raast)

10. Baakharz — Vikar is mixed with Persian raag.

11. Faro-Dast — Mixture of Kanada, Gauri and Purbi with one Persian raag.

12. Munam (Sagam)— Raag Kalyan was amalgamated with a Persian one\(^1\).

Other than these Persian Bahro and Vajno was involved in the formation of 17 talas. These are Pashto, Jubhar, Qwalli, Sole Fakhta, Mori (Jat), Jala-Titala, Savari, Aada Chautala, Jhamra, Jhaptala, Khamsa, Farodast, Pahalwan Kaid, Daastan, Pattaal and Chapak\(^2\).

Same as the above mentioned contribution of Khusrau Abdul Halim Jaferkhan stated some of Khusrau’s inventions as follows—
Ragas—Raga Yaman Kalyan, Raga Sarpada, Raga Hejaz Or Basant Mukhari, Raga Saazgari, Raga Shahana, Raga Jangla or Rangola Raga Farzhana, Raga Kaafi, and Raga Zeelaf.

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2 Ibid, p- 22.
**Talas**—Sur Fakhta, Chapak Taal, Farodast, Jhoomra, Teen Taal, Pashto, Dhumali, Zubahr and Zubaher ‘Gat’.

In the second risala of Khusrau’s Ijaz-i-Khusrawi a section deals with the music and musicians, as well as the different instruments generally employed. Dr. Wahid Mirza agree to it but, find it difficult to determine exactly the extent or importance of the modifications introduced by him.

According to an old Persian work on Indian music (Which is supposed to be a translation of an older work written during Raja Man Sing of Gwaliyar), he invented the following new melodies: mujir, sazgari, aiman, ushshaq, muwafiq, ghazan, zilaf, farghana, sarparda bakharz, firodast, munam, qaul, tarana, Khayal, nigar, basit, shahana and suhila. Other than the selected ragas introduced by him some styles of singing should also be given equal weightage.

**Qaul**: This was a song of Arabic words mixed with the tarana.

**Tarana**: It is a Persian word which means song. Tillana is a corrupt form of this word. Khusrau had before him the example of Nirgit songs using susk-aksaras (meaning less words) and pat-aksaras.

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1 Abdul Halim Jaferkhan, Commemoration Volume, 1975, Amir Khusrau and Hindustani Music, p- 270.
3 Dr. Wahid Mirza, Life and Works of Amir Khusrau, London, p- 238.
5 Ibid, p- 277.
(mnemonic syllables of the mridang). Khusrau introduced two innovations in this form of vocal music. He introduced mostly Persian words with soft consonants and arranged them in such a way that they bore some sense. He also introduced hindi words to add to the sense of song.

Example of the words used by him together with their meaning—

Dani : You know, thou knowest (Persian)
Yala : Freedom (Persian)
Ya lala : A short form of Ya Allah. Ya Allah meaning ‘O! God’

Taranas/Tellanas are the songs sung rhythmically with the syllables (bols) used to represent the strokes of the drum.

**Khayal** : Khayal literally means imagination, thought or fancy. It is that vocal genre of all North Indian vocal styles. It gives the greatest opportunity and also the greatest challenge to display the depth and breadth of their musical knowledge and skills, which dominated the performing art for past 150 years. It is the emotion or inspiration of the master minds in the art of singing of the medieval age. Though the

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2 Alain Danielou (Shiva Sharan), Northern Indian Music., Vol I, 1949, Calcutta Vishva Bharti, p- 119.
3 Internet, Indian Classical Music.
imagination is free of bondages and limitations but still the khayal singing comprised of three main characteristics—

(i) The raag (melodic mode), the taal (meter) and the cheez (composition)

(ii) The types of improvisation acceptable for Khayal such as alap, taan, botaan, sargam and nom-tom.

(iii) The placement of these material for creation of technically balanced performance.

Speculations suggest that Khayal originated with Amir Khusrau but some historians say that Sultan Husain Sherqui of Jaunpur is to be credited for his great contribution to music. Contrary to both views most historians are of the opinion that neither Khusrau nor Sharqui Sultan was the innovator of Khayal, but that Khayal was an outcome of the gradual process of evolution that was a part of Indo-Persian amalgamation.

The inference which could be drawn out of controversies is that Khayal could be the invention of Khusrau as he was having a good grip over the emotions of human nature. Imagination composition should be
credited to him as he was having the blessings of the other world (through his Guru Nizamuddin Auliya) and the support of this world (patronage by the different Sultans).

Throughout most of its existence Khayal has always been the music of elite patrons, and none other group attained significant involvement in Khayal.

The tradition of a Khayal recital is typically divided into two parts:

Bara (great) Khayal and Chhota (small) Khayal

During Bara Khayal the artist is expected to cover a range of subjects. Ideally giving importance to all musical elements such as melody, rhythm and technique, with a contemplative beginning to invoke the very mood of the raag. The lyrical as well as melodic content of bara khayal compositions are devotional or romantic and they are set in vilambit laya (slow tempo). Bara Khayal is followed by a madhya or drut laya (fast tempo) in chhota khayal. Hence, the artist carries the mood created during the earlier part of the recital to its crescendo. The acceleration is maintained during the performance with increasing complexity of taans and interplay with rhythm.

The compositions written for chhota khayal have syllabic text settings appropriate for the faster tempo. The performing ensemble for
Khayal consists of a lead soloist, an accompanist on a melody producing instrument such as harmonium or sarangi (bowed lute), a table (drum) player and one or two tanpura players to provide continuous drone. A possible addition to the basic ensemble would be a supporting singer. The role of the accompanist is to complement the lead vocals by repeating of phrases during short breaks.¹

Shahana: Khusrau himself says for Shahana,

“We added or allotted to ‘it’ a ‘tune’ for being played on the occasion of the royal ceremonies’ Shahana should have been thus a recognised addition to the scheduled ‘TUNE’ for naubat playing.²

This way we observe that how the compositions of Khusrau of mixed ragas, innovation of new taals and styles of singing added to the cultural value of Indian music.

Invention of Musical Instruments:—

The three most important instruments which are usually attributed to Khusrau are—

1. Sitar  2. Tabla  3. Dholak³

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¹ Internet (Indian Classical Music)
² Professor Shahab Sarmadee, Khusrau and Indian Music, Amir Khusrau’s Own writings about music, Commemoration Vol., 1975, p- 262.
SITAR: It is perhaps the most popular stringed instrument in India. The word ‘Sitar’ is Persian (Iranian) in origin, meaning three strings (Seh-Three and tar-string). The Persian Setar similar to the Turkish saz, is a long thin-necked lute with a small wooden body. The Shuddha scale of the sitar is the same as the shuddha scale of the Northern school, and is believed to be a transposed form of the ancient shuddha scale of the ‘Veena’ of which sitar is, but a modified form. It consist of two layers of strings made of steel, brass and copper. The bottom layer of approximately 13 steel strings are referred to as ‘taraf’ (Persian word for excitement or joy) and rest on a small one inch long bone bridge, which is a fraction of an inch high. These strings are tuned to the notes of the raag being performed and resonate when the strings on the main (top) bridge are plucked. The top layer of 7 strings used to create the melody and drone, rest between three bridges on one end of the neck and a main bridge that rests on the ground section. Two of these three bridges anchor two of the three chikari (drone) strings that serve to extend notes and/or punctuate the rhythm. The remaining 5 strings lie on a bridge that spans the width of the neck. All 7 strings converge, in a parallel manner on the main bridge that sits on the gourd

1 Internet, “About Sitar”.
section. The main bridge is about three inches long, and one inch in both height and width. Made of antelope horn (and optionally a layer of wood on surface), the bridge’s slightly curved shape contributes to the tonal quality of the instrument, including the distinctive buzzing sound. Over time, the melodic strings cut into the bridge and require it to be reshaped. Coarse tuning of sitar strings is achieved by using 13 small wooden regs for the tarafs and seven large regs for the melody and drone/chikari strings. Fine tuning of the melody strings is accomplished by using small beads.

As it is said to have originated at the Khanqah of Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya, in all probability its style might have been somewhat mystic and spiritual.

Though some musicians and historians are of opinion that Sitar was not an innovation by Khusrau but traditionally he has been considered as the inventor of it. Ravi Shankar the world known sitar exponent appreciates Khusrau in his book “My Music, My Life” as:

“Shortly after the time of Sharangdeva, there lived on extraordinary innovator and genius Amir Khusrau who was a lover of music and a skilled musician. Because of his musical talents and

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1 Internet (About Sitars).
immense imitative powers he was called a Shurtidar. A name given to one, who can produce any sound musical or not even if he has heard it only once. He is responsible for a number of modifications of musical instruments, and in particular the Sitar; for creating some raags that are heard today and for developing and popularising some well known styles of singing. ......... It is an undeniable fact that Amir Khusrau did make some alterations and gave the instrument a new name “Seh Tar’. One of the innovations that he brought to the ‘Seh-Tar’ was to reverse the order of the string giving the instrument the present day universal arrangement of strings”.

Now a days three types of sitars are in vogue. The biggest size is known as ‘Sur Bahar’, the Average one as ‘Sitar’ and the one which is the smallest in size as the ‘Sundari’.

**TABLE** : Khusrau has also been credited for the formation of Tabla from the contemporary musical instruments like Mridang and Pakhawaj. He converted Mridang into Tabla and Baya, ancient books on music informed that an instrument only a little different from ‘tabla’

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1 Raja Sultan Maqsood, Chapter IV, Music : Khusrau the Innovator, 1975, 700th Anniversary of Amir Khusrau, p- 82.
3 Raja Sultan Maqsood, Music : Khusrau the Innovator, Amir Khusrau critical studies, National Committee for 700th Anniversary of Amir Khusrau., 1975, p- 84.
existed long before\(^1\). Due to this very reason or some other many of the historians and musicians did not credit Tabla to Khusrau. But it is also true that Khusrau had a wide knowledge of raags, raganas and instruments of foreign lands, many of which he introduced in India after suitable additions or modifications and ‘Tabla’ appears to be one such instrument\(^2\). During the ancient era it might be having a different shape. from what it appears today but its present shape is the gift of Khusrau\(^3\) to the music world.

He not only designed the instrument but also laid down the ways in which it was, to be played. He determined its ‘baaj’ and its ‘bols’\(^4\). Gave a static and valid form to his innovation. The bols normally used in the tabla are: Dhin, na, dha, tit, kit, ghadan, dhir, dhir, dhir, tirk etc.\(^5\).

It is said that the sound produced by Pakhawaj is very deep and voluminous, so to make it a little soft and mild Khusrau had divided original one into two parts in shape only and named each part as Tabla and Banya. The right hand drum is said to be ‘Tabla’ and the left hand one as ‘Banya’\(^6\).

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We can credit the both instruments i.e. Sitar and Tabla to Khusrau as a particular style of music called Jore and Gut Toda is played when the drum Tabla accompanies Sitar¹.

**Dholak**: Nearly 700 years² ago ‘Dholak’ came into existence but never attained the status of a solo instrument. It might be due to this reason only its description is hard to find in comparison to other instruments. However it is well known as any other Indian musical instrument. Though the invention of Dholak by Khusrau is a matter of controversy like Sitar but the ‘bols’ to be played on it like kid, kidan, git, jha etc.³ are credited to him only. Another point in favour that it is most often used along with the qawwali⁴, which was the regular feature of Nizamuddin’s Khanqah. In shape it closely resembles the Pakhawaj and is most often used as an accompaniment to singing. Its thap and thapki are just the modified form of the ‘thap’ of tabla⁵. Since 700 years uptil today the instrument is holding its charm among masses because of its extensive use as light music in folk songs and on festive occasions.

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⁵ Ibid, p- 273.
Khusrau not only invented Tabla, Dholak and Sitar but also set forms of their playing and in that he relied on Indian as well as Iranian styles. For these he invented 17 taals among which the prominent are: Khamsa (5 taal), Savari (4 taal), Farodast (5 taal), Pahalvan (4 taal), Chapla (3 taal), Janani Savari (5 and 7 taal), Pashto (1 taal), Ara Chautala (4 taal), Qawwali (3 taal), Jhumar (3 taal) etc.¹.

To all his contributions to the Indian culture and literature we should credit his Guru Auliya whose humane mission of love and compassion, stood in stark contrast to the aggressive and ambitious conduct of successful potentates of that age. Khusrau choose Hindi poetry and music to spread the gospel of love and compassion of his spiritual guide². He held Indian music in high esteem, in Nuh sipihr he stated,

"Indian Music, the fire that burns heart and soul is superior to the music of any other country. Foreigners, even after a stay of thirty or forty years in India, cannot play a single Indian tune correctly. Indian music charms not only men but also beasts. Deer have been hypnotised and hunted simply by music"³.

¹ Dr. Sohanpal Sumanakshar, Amir Khusrau, p- 28.
² Raja Sultan Maqsood, Music : Khusrau the Innovator, Amir Khusrau Critical studies, National Commemoration for 700th Anniversary of Amir Khusrau, 1975, p- 84.
³ Jai Deva Singh, Khusrau’s Musical Compositions, Commemoration Vol., p- 278.
His patrons no doubt had a good taste for music and musical parties. About the contemporary state musicians Khusrau speaks—“They were the ordainers and organisers of the state musical assemblies”, and further categorised them into five sections—

(i) those who moisten the universe with the dewy melody of ‘chang’.
(ii) those who tune heat the sun with the rhythmic energy of Duff.
(iii) those who treat the aesthetes with the soul-stirring, whispers of their dainty-throated ‘Nay’ (flute).
(iv) those who invent and innovate, to the ecstasy of the receptive hearts by improving on melodic delicacies
(v) lastly as those whose Arabic Quals and Ghazals render the best tongue-tied and whose plectrum strokes and string play roll like clouds and fall in sweet torrents like bursting rains.

These all represent the choicest of the realm—those who, hum closest to the Sultan’s ears and remain nearest to the throne¹.

The above description depicts the richness of music and musicians at that time, that how the cultural aspects gained momentum by the contemporary talents of which Khusrau was a part. During the time of Alauddin Khilji he was credited for organising musical parties at Delhi.

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¹ Professor Shahab Sarmadee, Amir Khusrau’s own writings about music, Commemoration Vol., 1976, p- 245.
In one such party, Khusrau defeated the contemporary musician Gopal Nayak and earned the ‘Nayak’ title for himself from Sultan. In his fifth Diwan ‘Nihayat-ul-Kalam, while eulogizing the Deogiri music he writes, “The other thing is the sweet song of Sarod for every stroke of the bow or the plectrum emits the pleasing plaintive notes like those of the harp of the venus. There is no wonder if by their music a dead man is brought back to life, for the musical expression in the heart of every melodic notes infuses new life”.

The above statement shows the sensitivity of Khusrau towards emotional aspect of life and towards the importance of music in life. This balance of emotions in the mind of a courtier should not be graded lightly, this all was possible for him because his soul was getting continuous nurturing from his spiritual Guru Auliya. His blessings bestowed over Khusrau made him unique and vise-versa such a devoted disciple got the sublime traits as reward of his total surrender to the feet of Auliya. This interpretation is a matter of personal assessesment of the writers but at last we can conclude with these words:

1 Dr. Sohanpal Sumanakshar, Amir Khusrau, p- 27.
2 Prof. S.H. Askari, Amir Khusrau as a Historian Khuda Baksh Oriental Public Library, Patna, p- 156.
“Amir Khusrau is justly famous for his poetic talents and effusions. He was a man of versatile genius, aesthetic tastes and many sided activities. He was undoubtedly well-versed in liberal sciences including MUSIC.”

Music fusions mixing and blending western and Indian concepts is so popular these days in India. In our Indian film industry today it was first introduced by Pankaj Malik about six decades ago. Today A.R. Rehman and Vishal Bharadwaj type of music directors are freely doing it. However 700 years ago a visionary and a music genius i.e. Khusrau has so successfully, experimented the fusion of Indian, Persian sounds and tunes, that in the centuries to come they became Indianised version. Such was the spectrum of the music wizard.

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1 Prof. S.H. Askari, Amir Khusrau as a Historian Khuda Baksh Oriental Public Library, Patna, p- 157, 158.