
Difference between Delhi and Ajrana Gharana in Tabla Playing: A Review-Based Comparative Study

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Abstract: *The Delhi tabla Gharana was established by Ustad Siddharth Khan Dhaadhi. The Delhi Gharana gave birth to other Gharanas. His grandsons and their numerous students dispersed to different places across the nation and stayed there. They changed their game in response to the local conditions and created a unique playing style based on their talent, which later gained recognition as a distinct Gharana. The results of the study show that the Ajranabaz has all the characteristics of Delhi Baz. In Ajranabaz also the use of fingers in the output of words is similar to that of Delhi Baz. There isn't much difference between the playing style of Delhi and Ajrana Gharanas. To create a unique impact, most of the compositions in this Gharana are in TishraJati (multiples of three or six counts in the original speed). The left mean or echo is not necessarily used in the Delhi Baz, in which the left is played repeatedly without raising the hand with the middle and index fingers. In Delhi Baz, soft and soft sounds are made from the right and left, so their speed is quite fast. Lastly, the Delhi Baz is the first hawk of tabla playing.*

Keywords: *Delhi Gharana; Ajarana Gharana; Tabla; Indian Music; Indian Classical Music; Tabla Playing.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The creation of numerous unique bold, distinctive playing methods, compositional styles, and rhythmic patterns can be attributed to the tabla Gharana. Gharanas served as a way for tabla musicians to pass down these styles from one generation to the next (Kaimal and Barde, 2018). Early in the 18th century is when gharanas are first mentioned in history. The first and oldest traditional tabla gharana is thought to be Delhi Gharana. Other gharanas were also born as a result of their graduates. Each of these gharanas has a few notable musicians and masters (Pradhan, 2004). The honorific names for Hindu and Muslim tabla players are Pandit and Ustad, respectively. In recent years, modernization and easy access to transportation have weakened the tight boundaries between these gharanas (Bhagat, 2016).

New gharanas could also form because of the geopolitical circumstances in a location, which may provide a stimulus for new ways of thinking. Two important distinctions put gharanas apart. One of them is *baz* or the playing style (Bernabei, 2019). The second and more significant component is the thought system of the gharana. For example, although both Delhi and Ajrana are both of "band back," the main point that separated both schools of music, apart from their *nikaas*, was their thought system.

In 1738, Mughal Emperor Muhammad Shah (Nasir-ud-Din Muhammad Shah) employed several musicians in his court. Under Sadarang's influence, percussionists developed *tabla* (which is an unconfirmed theory). From this point, they used *tabla* for *khayal-gayaki*. We have different and conflicting information about *tabla* lineages and *tabla* players' birth/death dates, however, in general, we are confident that the Gharana started approximately in the 18th century (Wikipedia, 2022). Previously, *tabla* was mainly used for accompaniment, but *tabla* players further elaborated on solo performances during the 18th century while also developing gharanas. During the arrival of the British, kings/nawabs looked towards luxury and failed to do much service to their communities. However, their care and employment of musicians for luxury remained the same. The creation of any new gharana starts with a renewed style of thinking, resulting in a review of the playing style, which causes some students of a particular generation to utilize the new style of playing (Thalwitzer, 2015). If the same new style is sustained and followed for at least 3 generations, it is said that a new gharana is created.

New gharanas began when students tried to do something different, either because of dissatisfaction or curiosity, both of which are intrinsic to human nature. New gharanas could also form because of the geopolitical circumstances in a location, which may provide a stimulus for new ways of thinking (Vishwa, 2014). Two important distinctions put gharanas apart. One of them is *baz* or the playing style. The second and more significant component is the thought system of the gharana. For example, although both Delhi and Ajrana are both of "band baz," the main point that separated both schools of music, apart from their *nikaas*, was their thought system.

Delhi Gharana

It is the oldest and the first Gharana of the *table*, credit for establishing it goes to Ustad Siddhar Khan Dhadi (Srivastava, 2022). Dhadi is a sect that was mainly known for entertainers. Delhi Gharana is also referred to as *Kinaarbazor DOUNGALIYON KA BAJ* (use of two fingers for their playing style). We don't have an exact date of the origin of this gharana, but it is believed that it was established in the 18th century during the reign of Mohammad Shah. (Almost 300-350 Years back) The focus of this gharana is mainly on:

1. *Qaida* (a structured improvisation consisting of a theme and variations)
2. *Relas* (continuous flow of intricately woven strokes played at very high speed)
3. *Mukhdas* (extremely short phrases played towards the end of the *taal*)
4. *Mohras* (short sprightly phrases with an even shorter *tihai*)

It features virtuosic, sometimes difficult-to-play compositions. The syllables mostly used are *Dha*, *Dhage*, *Ta*, *Tita*, *Kita*, *Dhin*, *Na*. Most of the compositions are in *ChatushraJaati* (multiples of two, four, or eight counts, in the original speed). Some of the *Tabla* players from this gharana are Ustad Roshan Khan, Ustad Chand Khan, Ustad Inam Ali Khan, Ustad Azim Khan, and Ustad Latif Ahmed Khan.

Ajrana Gharana

Because the founder brothers of this Gharana, Ustad Kallu Khan, and Miru Khan, were Sitaab Khan's students, it is frequently assumed that this Gharana is a descendant of the Delhi Gharana (disciple of one of the sons of Ustad Siddhar Khan, the father of Delhi Gharana). They were basically from Uttar Pradesh but settled in Ajrara village near present-day Meerut. Tabla players from this gharana took the liberty to increase the speed with the use of the last two fingers (ring finger and little finger). Tabla players of this gharana have worked a lot on the improvement of the Banyan (the low drum of the tabla pair). They focused on the balance between both the drums: especially on how to produce a Meend which is called GHISSA (gliding from one syllable to another). In addition to Peshkar and Qaida, this Gharana focuses on other compositions like Gat, Gat tode, etc. Usage of some phrases in this gharana are Nagena, Ghetak, Dhingdhina Dhagena, Tirakita etc. Ustad Kallu Khan, Ustad Habibbudin Khan, Ud. Shamsuddin Khan, Prof. Sudhir Kumar Saxena, and Ustad Akram Khan are noteworthy tabla players of this Gharana (Wikipedia, 2022).

2. METHODOLOGY

This is a review-based comparative study that describes the difference between Delhi and Ajarana Gharana. The research has used Narrative review on the selected topic for synthesizing primary studies and explores this through description rather than statistics.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Ajrana gharana was the first to depart from Delhi customs. The Ajrana musicians took the conventional Delhi kaidas and played them in "tisrajati," where one beat is divided into three instead of four as is customary (approximately equivalent to the idea of 4/3 time in Western music as opposed to 4/4 time), which gave the compositions more color and nuance. Additionally, many of the kaidas were "stretched" by adding a second line to the original kaida, expanding the possibilities for what may be played (Robbins et al., 2016). The Delhi Gharana finally "subsumed" the Ajrana Gharana to a significant extent. There are few "pure" Ajrana gharana players left. Ustad Akram Khan is perhaps the most well-known exponent of the Ajrana style today. He exhibits a very clean and clear style of tabla playing focused on the "kinar" rather than the "sur" which is a hallmark of the Delhi and Ajrana styles (Fitzgerald, & Reis, 2014).

(A) Lineage

Delhi Gharana: Ustad Siddharth Khan Dandi Ji reinvented the tabla in the Delhi royal courts and introduced it to the populace. He established the Gharana tradition on the table (Kaimal and Barde, 2018). The names of well-known tabla musicians associated with the Delhi Gharana are as follows: U. Ghasit Khan, U. Bugra Khan, U. Kallu Khan, U. Meeru Khan, U. Shafat Ahmad, etc.

Ajrana Gharana: The lineage tradition of this Gharana is as follows - Kallu Khan and Meeru Khan are considered to be the originators of this Gharana (Pradhan, 2004). He took education from Delhi's famous tabla player Sitab Khan as he lived in Ajrana, a village in the Meerut district. Mohammadi Baksh was a famous tabla player in his lineage.

(B) Playing techniques

Delhi Gharana: Ustad Siddharth Khan Dandi Ji, introduced the technique of playing on Chaati with two fingers, the index and middle finger. Considered a moderately resonant style (like Ajrana), the Delhi Gharana is classified with the "bandh baz" (closed style) rather than the "khulabaz" (open style) of Punjab and Farukhabad. This baz is greatly appreciated when played Solo (Bhagat, 2016).

Ajarana Gharana: The usage of intricate Bols and Meend is what makes this Gharana unique. Pakhawajbols are uncommon. Ad and Barabarlaya are under pressure. The three-time pattern is its area of expertise. The left drum remains in place, but the thumb is used to contact its face. (Srivastava, 2022).

(C) Bol patterns

Delhi Gharana: This Gharana is known for its Peshkaar, Kayda, Rela, and Mukhda specialties. The ChatusraJaati syllables used in this Gharana's Kayda include Dhit, Kit, tiT, Dhaage, Naage, Kinaa, Tinaa, and DhirDhir. This Gharana's sound quality is soft and mellow, and it is extremely lovely (Bernabei, 2019).

Ajarana Gharana: Bol patterns in the Ajrara Gharana style are more intricate than those in the Delhi Gharana. Pakhawajbols are uncommon. Ad and Barabarlaya are under pressure. Three-time patterns are its area of expertise (Vishwa, 2021). The left table remains in its original location, and the most popular boys are Dhina Gi Na, Ghe Ghe Tit Kit, and Dha Ge Na. It is widely valued that the kayas of this baz are from the Trisay caste.

(D) Kaydas

Delhi Gharana: Baz of Delhi Gharana was greatly appreciated that its kaydas are of Trisay caste.

AjaranaGharna: Baz of this Gharana was greatly appreciated when played Solo.

4. CONCLUSION

The majority of performers exhibit the peculiarities of the Delhi Gharana. This Gharana is known for its Peshkaar, Kayda, Rela, and Mukhda specialties. The ChatusraJaati syllables used in this Gharana's Kayda include Dhit, Kit, tiT, Dhaage, Naage, Kinaa, Tinaa, and DhirDhir. This Gharana's music has a soft, mellow tone that is particularly pleasing. Compared to the Delhi Gharana, the Ajarana Gharana style has more intricate bol patterns. Pakhawajbols are uncommon. Ad and Barabarlaya are under pressure. The three-time pattern is its area of expertise. The position of the left table is not changed, Bols like DhinaGiNa, GheGhe Tit Kit, Dha Ge Na, etc. are most frequently used. In order to make each part of the verses longer, in Ajranabaz another special additional slang is also added. Due to this, beauty comes in the playing of the law, but the use of expansion in it becomes limited. The composition of the words of the laws of Ajranabaz is difficult and is often done in a horizontal rhythm.

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