

**Appreciating Hindustani Music**  
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**Lecture - 33**  
**Gharanas of Khayal - An Introduction**

Hello and welcome. The discussions in this section of our course will deal with the Gharanas of Hindustani music. Now we cannot hope to address each and every gharana in this short course nor can we hope to examine any single gharana in great detail. Instead the attempt here will be to look at a few of the major historically important gharanas as representatives of contrasting musical approaches to raag sangeet.

So, through short audio video clips and demonstrations we are going to try to get a glimpse that how the same larger system of raag, taal and bandish changes in the hands of musicians with very different aesthetic leanings performative abilities cultural backgrounds and world views. Before we get into the music though let us take a quick look at the historical and social forces that led to the formation of the gharanas as we think of them today.

So, it is often assumed that gharanas are an essential aspect of Hindustani music, but it is important to remember that despite claims to the contrary gharanas as we know them today are a very recent phenomenon. Scholars point out that no books dealing with music up until the 19th century make any mention of gharanas at all.

Now although the Banis of Dhrupad are close parallel and a conceptual precursor, the khayal genre seems to have been free of such distinctly identifiable schools of aesthetic or musical thought before the 19th century. Before the 19th century families of hereditary musicians found employment.

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In the various powerful princely courts that had risen across Northern and Western India. In the wake of the decline of the Mughal power in Delhi. In this era the term khandan was used.

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To literally mean a family of hereditary musicians where for instance a court musician's son might be appointed court musician after his father's demise. But after the 1850's you know with the introduction of the railways, the telegraph and the political turmoil of 1857 there was a gradual rise in urbanization. And many hereditary musicians moved

away from the princely courts to the new urban centres in search of new forms of patronage and opportunity.

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Cities like Mumbai were now gradually evolving into important centres of transportation, of communication and newly rich merchant patrons and the growing middle class audiences. So, it was in these urban centres that musicians from across Northern India found themselves in close proximity to and often in competition with one another. The gharanas as we know them today emerged from this situation.

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They were socio musical identities that musicians gave themselves in order to contrast their particular musical culture with that of their peers. But gharanas were different from the earlier khandans in one important way. These khandani ustads now started accepting large numbers of non hereditary disciples.

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Thanks to the efforts of nationalist reformers like V. N. Bhatkhande and V. D. Paluskar, the musical profession had acquired respectability now and the middle classes were able to now imagine a career in music for themselves. So, gradually non hereditary musicians became disciples of khandani ustads, where they learned and consolidated their particular repertoire vocal styles and approaches to improvise improvisation. While often even being careful not to acquire contrasting styles.

These pedagogical groups these groups of teaching and learning were called gharanas and were named after the ustads native towns that is how you have the Agra gharana, Gwalior, Jaipur, Kirana, Patiala, etcetera. But the term gharana was now a more inclusive term, it no longer denoted a family lineage like khandan did; it now denoted a pedagogical lineage a lineage of teachers and students.

So, after independence the situation changed even further, gharanas were in strengths now, but as media and communication technology grew and more and more diverse music became easily accessible and available to everyone gharana started to be perceived as a set of contrasting aesthetic musical approaches to developing a khayal. This trend

has continued. So, that today while there are certainly musicians who diligently stick to a single gharana idiom, most musicians tend to borrow both repertoire and stylistic approach freely from various gharanas.

So, in the following sessions we will try to gain an understanding of the gharanas, primarily as contrasting aesthetical approaches stylistic musical approaches to the same larger system of khayal. We look at the gharanas as different dialects of the same musical language of raag, taal and bandish.