

PESHKAR; THE INCEPTION OF ILLUSTRATION IN TABLA SOLO OF ALL GHARANA

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Abstract

Indian classical music bifurcates into two major categories – one is Carnatic music, which primarily originated from Southern India. Another is Hindustani or North Indian Classical Music which prevails in northern, eastern, and central regions of the Indian subcontinent. Specifically speaking, the application of Peshkar in Tabla stands out as its primary percussion instrument which is mainly a North Indian musical terminology. The Tabla consists of a set of two drums: Dayan (right drum) and Bayan (left drum). It holds significance in preserving musical rhythm or ‘laya’, whether it be used for solo renditions or accompaniment purposes. This discussion primarily focuses on the Peshkar’s role during solo performances of Tabla. The playing techniques for the Tabla can be categorized into ‘open Baaj’ and ‘closed Baaj’. The term ‘Peshker’ is one of the key terminologies across all Tabla Gharanas. There exist six primary gharanas, namely Delhi, Farrukhabad, Lucknow, Ajdara, Punjab and Banaras. Among these Gharanas; Delhi is considered to be the root of them all. Typically, a Solo performance of Tabla begins with Peshkar as per tradition. This practice was then followed in other gharanas too. Thus, showcasing its universal adoptions barring a few exceptions like Banaras Gharana where initial performance follows a different format known as Auchar; Uthan instead. Various intricate techniques of Tabla, such as Upaj, Laya-Laykari, Bols, and short phrases, can be effectively utilized within the realm of Peshkar. The presentation of a well-executed Peshkar has the potential to enhance any solo Tabla performance significantly.

Keywords: Peshkar, Gharana, Inception, Illustration, Baaj, Laya-Laykari, Upaj

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Introduction

The saying “many men, many minds” is akin to the various playing styles across different Gharanas. Peshkar serves as a fountainhead of diversity and it’s only through peshkar that one can perform a Tabla solo.

Various forms and kinds of lyrical pieces have been created in our Poetic literature. We often see that in many of the poetic compositions, basic ‘Metres’ and or ‘metrical patterns’ are used. Poets also resort to such figures of speech as ‘Rhyme’ and ‘Alliteration’. (Mainkar, 09)

Typically, the representation of Tabla is categorized into two segments: Eastern and Western styles. Each style has distinctive musical arrangements, which are known as Khulla and Bandh Baaj. Tabla encompasses a literary aspect with various forms of poetry and music terminology created in accordance with specific musical guidelines; these include Peshkar, Kayda, Rela, Uthan, Tukra, Gaat Paran Chakradar among others. Numerous elements such as distinct rhythms, musical cycles, and imitations can be identified in many of these items.

The various musical sounds emanating from Tabla are known after the syllables that follow the sounds. Such sounds are both vowel-based and also based on consonants. (Mainkar, 09)

The skillful application of different alphabets and compositions also adds to the complexity. Consequently, solo Tabla playing is rendered as beautiful, authentic, and appealing among other qualities due to these aspects. Peshkar serves as one of the primary themes of Tabla recital, executing a Tabla solo using decorative applications from Peshkar presents considerable challenges given its unique nature. There have been numerous variations observed in it. The distinct formats of peshkar presented by the six Gharanas led to the emergence of a new Gharana. Another charm of Peshkar is seen through Upaj, which signifies spontaneous creation. Furthermore, Peshkar also serves as a reflection and representation of the artist’s skill and style.

A wide variety of metres is seen used in poetry with superb artistry. It is by the use of all these techniques and devices that poetry becomes appealing, melodious and very alluring and also because of its being exquisitely proportionate in form. (Mainkar, 09)

In conventional terms, music is often defined as the harmonious blend of song, instrumental sound, and dance - a triune entity. Tabla literature comprises numerous terminologies to describe these techniques among other aspects related to performance practice. In vocal music instruction comparable with *alaap* recitation is provided which mirrors how the *peshkar* playing process is taught after receiving it from a guru in specific forms. However, executing it without adding a personal artistic touch may lead to its perception as mechanical or lack of creativity.

Tabla

The history of Tabla is quite complex with numerous uncertainties. As per various scholars, the origins of Tabla can be traced back to Muslim musicians in the 13th century, primarily attributed to Hazrat Amir Khusru.

There is no mention of even a single Tabla player among the musicians of the period of Akbar (1556-1605 AD). Not only this, till the time of Muhammad Shah Rangeela (reign 1719-1748 AD), there is mention of many musical instrument players, but the name of Tabla player is not found. (Shrivastav, 2013, 12) (Translated from Taal Parichay Part 2)

It is widely accepted that the Tabla originated around the 18th century. This corresponds to when Ustad Sidhar Khan, a resident of Delhi at that time was born. The first Gharana or school of Tabla playing known as 'Delhi Baaj' was reportedly invented by him. However, there exist various perspectives on the history and origins of Tabla, which fall under 'Andhya Vadya' (rhythmic instruments). It consists of two parts - *Dayna* and *Bayan*- both covered with leather for sound production.

Tabla, however, is only one of the many percussion instruments of India which may be put under two broad categories. The first comprises drums that are used essentially in the region of classical music, and the second covers those that are meant to provide rhythm to folk music. (Saxena, 2018, 05)

The *Pakhāwaj* is older than Tabla. Tabla comparatively is a recent invention. Basically, in the past, the *Pakhawaj* and Tabla, were mostly applied as accompaniment instruments in classical music, which are quite well known to our 'rasikas'.

Inception of Tabla

The term ‘inception’ here refers to the process of summarizing, editing, and embellishing all elements including phrases and Tabla terminologies. This concept is grounded in Peshkar - a fundamental theme in solo Tabla playing.

The composition of the Peshkar of the Delhi School, largely, is well-defined and well-planned. (Mainkar, 78)

Peshkar can be played on Tabla as pre-planned or composed for beginner Tabla players as well. When the amateur Tabla Players perform Peshkar on Tabla that also presents the personality of the students according to their depth of dedication in musical journey.

Peshkar

The recitation of Peshakar is referred as Subjective form. For example, if two individuals belong to the same Gharana or are the disciples of the same Guru, their presentation of Peshkar can be different from each other, which based on their personality, musical knowledge, and realization of musical ‘Taalem’.

‘Peshkar’ is a Persian word meaning introducer, presenter or introducer. Its root word is ‘pesh’. Pleadings take place in courts, whose function is to present cases (lawsuits) before judges. Peshkar playing in Tabla playing is its fundamental specialty. (Shrivastav, 2018, 62)
(Translated by this Author from Taal Parichay Part 1)

Peshkar represents the poetic aspect of Tabla play. It involves a diverse range of bols, or phonetics, organized according to their combined sound groups. The arrangement and materials used in Tabla contribute greatly to its literature; creating poetry harmonized with melody and rhythm. The skillful usage of various bols and banis enhances the artistic value of Peshkar making it beautifully authentic, appealingly sweet, and attractive.

Especially the Tabla players of Delhi and Ajrada Gharana do their independent playing only by playing Peshkar...It is certain that Peshkar is played only in independent playing and that too only in the beginning. See an example below:

dhik dhina traka dhina /kata dhik dhina kata

Tik tina traka tina / kata dhik dhina kata (Shrivastav, 2018, 62)
(Translated by this Author from Taal Parichay Part 1)

In short, we can say that Peshkar is also a kind of Kayda with beautiful words. But the rhythm or Laya of Peshkar is relatively beautiful and wavering. Generally, the peshkar is performed only in the middle rhythm or tempo. Hence the material for playing in Peshkar Madhya-Laya.

Illustration of Peshkar

The term “Peshkar” represents the variation of different Tabla phrases in diverse ways, with the intention to focus more attention on the subject rather than its artistry. These variations can manifest through Kayda, Rela or other specific technical terms associated with Tabla. Illustrations of Peshkar have some purposes, mainly giving the personality to the recitation of Tabla and the other purpose is to decorate the musical terminologies. The illustration of Peshkar can also be a poetic representation of a Tabla Solo.

Gharana

The concept of ‘gharana’ is believed to have started as early as the 14th century in Indian classical music. Initially, there were two main gharanas - qawal and kalaban along with some musical traditions; however, it was during the 14th century when harmonious gharana came into existence. Despite India’s ancient music history, the establishment of Gharana isn’t quite old. Interestingly enough, Gharanas predate Dhrupad’s creation. Currently, the term “Gharana” is widely used within the Indian classical Music realm. The term ‘house’ has many dictionary definitions, including residence, family, and genealogy. Linguists theorize the phrase ‘Sanskriti Griha’, which is common in both Bengali and Hindi languages, originated from it. However, in these contexts ‘house’ does not signify a physical dwelling but rather refers to a family or clan unit. Evaluating from a practical perspective in music, ‘gharana’ denotes a specific style. A gharana is established when a musician invents a unique method or structure by integrating their talent and personality with the canonical rules of musical performance. This particular gharana will exhibit distinctive features compared to other styles regarding its imagery or characteristics. Each Gharana has its founder, may be named subjectively, or based on geographical location, and traditions continue through disciples as well family members of original masters.

Peshkar of Delhi Gharana

This particular form of Tabla literature was first introduced in the solo performances in the Delhi gharana. Over time, it gained popularity amongst other Tabla players from different gharanas, who also incorporated Peshkar into their presentations. The use of Tita, Tikrit, Dhatai, Dhina, and more is notably prevalent in Peshkar performed by artists from the Delhi Gharana.

Ustad Inam Ali used to commence his recital of Peshkar with this Bandish and with a happy combination of spontaneity and discipline of the tradition; he artistically expanded the Peshkar by resorting to improvisation. (Mainkar, 78)

The Tabla players of Delhi Gharana are more eager to maintain authenticity, which follows a strict rule to present the peshkar. For that reason, their illustration of Peshkar is nearer to the presentation of phrases that are related to the Bols or the Alphabets of Kayda. Such as dha, kt, dhate, tetkt, tedha, dhina, dina, tina etc. In peshkar the word 'Dha' is mostly prominent. When the composition expands, from the previously mentioned word one of it takes new forms and it constantly expands gradually.

It is considered a peculiarity of this Peshkar that in the entire process of expansion, the word 'dha' is regarded as the main word. This peculiarity is seen especially in the Tabla-playing of Ustad Inam Ali and Ustad Natthu Khan, both of whom belonged to the Delhi School. (Mainkar, 78, 79)

A raga is typically performed by an artist beginning with the Alaap Kriya, followed by a bandish presented in a slow rhythm. Occasionally, singers may opt to present without rhythm alaap kriya within a restricted timeframe. The representation of the chosen raga through various Upaj of swara can extend over time and thus each "raga's" Alaap presents differently as part of its series elements. Analogously, peshkar's role in Tabla aligns with the function served by both Alaap Kira or Vilambit for any given Raga; it introduces all pertinent terminologies associated with playing Tabla.

Ustad Natthu Khan must have presented Peshkar compositions wherein 'dhin' was also the principal syllable. In short, the Delhi School did not look upon the Peshkar with 'dhin' as the main syllable, nor a taboo.

A popular Peshkar composition of the Delhi school is as follows:

| *dhaSKT dhaSteS dhaSteS KTdhaS* |

| *dhaSteS dhaSdhaS teSdhaS diSnaS* |

| *taSKT taSteS taSteT KTdhaS* |

| *dhaSteS dhaSdhaS teSdhaS diSnaS* | (*Mainkar, 78, 79*)

Generally, In Delhi Gharana Peshkar played in a Slow (Vilambit) tempo. Mostly in this Gharana, the various phrases of Tabla are applied in ‘four-four division’ or Chatasra jati format with proper harmony. Sometimes, different Jati’s of music(Tabla) could be applied to enhance its beauty.

Peshkar of Farukhabad Gharana

The Peshkar, typically tailored to each artist’s unique personality, can vary greatly in presentation even among disciples of the same Guru or members from the same gharana. While some artists may offer a more artistic and unrestrained interpretation, others might adhere strictly to discipline during their performance. Interestingly, when relating peshkar with Bharatamuni’s nava rasa (nine emotions), it could be considered under all nine rasaa; however fundamentally it aligns most closely with Shringar Rasa. An eminent figure from within said Gharana is Ustad Ahamedjan Thirakava. Thirakava started the application of anagat, tihais in peshkar.

In this style of the Peshkar which is known after Ustad Thirakava Sahib, many words, (barring ‘teT’ and ‘dhirdhir’) of the Tabla are used with deep thought. The basic composition of the Peshkar occurs in the book entitled “Aditaal” by Pandit Narayan Joshi.

I dhinSSkDdhinSnaS teSdhaSdhiSna dhaSteSdhaSteS
dhaSdhaStuSnaS I

I SSdhaSteSdhaS tuSnaSdhaStes dhaSKTtkdhinS naSdhaStuSnaS I

I SSStaSteStaS SSStaStuSnaS taSKTtktinS taStaStuSnaS I

I SSdhaSSkrdhaS tuSnaSdhiSnaS dhaStuSnaSdhi naSdhaStuSnaS I
(*Mainkar, 82*)

In Farukhabad Gharana, mostly all types of Jati, boles, and Phrases are applied in a very dramatic tempo with an extraordinary climax.

Peshkar of Punjab Gharana

The Punjab gharana is a highly esteemed school of Tabla, credited to the renowned pakhawaj player Lala Bhavani Das or Bhawani Singh. This gharana uniquely features Tabla playing styles akin to those of the pakhwaj. An interesting characteristic lies in its reverse rendition of Tita alphabet. Peshkar composition also forms part and parcel with Ustad Zakir Hussain notably elevating its stature through his performances.

A truly traditional Peshkar composition of the Punjab School has so far not been heard. But Ustad Alla Rakha Khan, who is looked upon as the only authority on the Punjab School, composed his own Peshkar-composition and he very imaginatively and with his own aesthetic sense... Ustad Alla Rakha's original Peshkar -Composition in the Tisra Jati is as follows:

- dhaSKDdha Sdhas teSdhaS SdhaS dhinSna SdhaS dhaSdhin SnaS

Chatasra 1SS S2S SS3 SSS 4SS S5S S6S SSS

Tisra 1SS SSS 2SS SSS 3SS SSS 4SS SSS (*Mainkar, 85*)

One of the greatest Tabla players in recent times, Ustad Zakir Hossain, and his father Ustad Allarakha Khan played this gharana. The application of phrases are mostly related to the Pakhwaj as well Open style or khulla Baaz.

Peshkar of Ajarada Gharana

This Gharana is renowned for its rapid playing style. Ustad Habibuddin Khan established it, and it significantly contributes to the utilization of 1.5 or tinging rhythms. The Peshkar rhythm from the Ajarada gharana neither lags nor rushes excessively. Through quick tempos, all instruments within the Ajarada gharana express their ideas and customs effectively.

Ustad Habeebuddin (Ajarada School) attached great importance to the Peshkar in his Tabla-playing, but he used to play his Peshkar in steady rhythm for a very short period. His Peshkar sounded very brilliant in the two-fold tempo. (Mainkar,85)

In Ajarada gharana, to play the boles in a fast tempoo they usually started the use of ring finger. And for that reason they established some boles so that they can play or recite the Tabla in a fast mode.

The composition normally played by Ustad Habibuddin as Peshkar is as under -

Dhasgdha(1) tedhagen(1) dhagedhinagena(1½) = (3½)

dhaStirKT^(3/4) dhatedhagen(1.^{1/4}) Dhagedhina(1) dhagetinakena (1½)
 = *(4½) + khali Part (Mainkar,86)*

generally, these mentioned boles are applied. But sometimes, different phrases are applied. such as dhinadhinagena, tinatinakena, dhatighenedhene, dhenedhatighene, katak, gheteak, etc boles are applied in very artistic manners.

Peshkar of Lucknow Gharana

The Peshkar performance was notably recognized in the gharana. A significant figure of it is Khalifa Ustad Wazed Hossain Khan Sahib. This particular gharana does not feature a jury for dance accompaniment, and its Peshkar boasts rich rhythmic diversity.

The old Peshkar of the Lucknow School, as Marhoom Ustad Akbar Hussain of the Lucknow School thought it, has been of this kind:

I teTKTdhinSdhaS dhinSSdhaSgdhaS dhinSdhinSdhaSdhaS
 dhinSSdhaSgdhaS I

I dhinSSdhaSgdhaS dhinSSdhaSgdhaS dhinSdhinSdhaSdhaS
 dhinSSdhaSgdhaS I

(And Khali)... this Bandish can sound more traditionally dignified had it begun with 'KTik' in place of 'te TKT' (Mainkar, 86)

The Peshkar of this Gharana is typically delivered in a slow tempo, accompanied by notable humming sounds on the Dagma or left side of the Tabla. The syllables associated with dagma include 'ge' and 'dhin dha', among others. Furthermore, Gamak features prominently and distinctly within the style's scope.

Peshkar of Banaras Gharana

Pandit Ram Sahay Ji is the founder and first master of his Gharana. Typically, a solo performance from our school begins with 'Uthan', characterized by its elongated bol pattern. The style used involves open strokes played using full palms, culminating in a beautifully crafted Tihai

towards the end. Sometimes, Uthan-bandishes may be pre-composed and performed as such. A delightful sound signature can also be achieved when playing Bandish for Uthan within our tradition; it's distinctive and refreshing to hearers' ears - Awchar might well embody what we'd consider Peshkar in other schools or styles.

The main purpose of playing the Uthan is to invite the attention of the audience and to create a mood of dynamism in their minds. (Mainkar, 87)

The Banaras gharana is one of the oldest gharana in table. In this gharana the peshkar is related with the application of awchar in Tin-tall, which means the presentation of Different Taalas in various formats. Which also be considered as Paltas of peshkar.

Conclusion

The presentation of Tabla in scriptures is objective, whereas its artistic representation tends to be subjective. Among all the terminologies associated with Tabla literature, Peshkar stands out as being highly subjective due to its close connection with the artist. The significance of Peshkar lies within solo performances on the Tabla; indeed, a successful completion of a solo piece largely depends upon application of Peshkar. The current trend is to focus primarily on the quick formation of Peshkar, Its nuanced features include Rela's Upaja Yeti application and most importantly Bharat Muni's Nava Rasa application which can form a solo Tabla performance. There is no restriction on word count for syntax in playing Peshkar. The artist selects vocabulary based on their artistic vision, and with the aid of these varied words, each masterful presentation is crafted.

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