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Eduardo Hazera April 16, 2012

Creating Stylistic Identity through Musical Hybridity in North India
Histories, Politics, and Theories for the Benares *Gharana*

by

Eduardo Hazera

Dr. Tong Soon Lee
Advisor

Department of Music

Dr. Tong Soon Lee
Advisor

Dr. Joyce Flueckiger
Committee Member

Dr. Melissa Cox
Committee Member

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Abstract

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When a classical vocalist starts singing at a concert in North India, the audience can often *hear* the vocalist's hereditary identity. Audience members may commend the musician for authentically performing his genealogical style or perhaps deride him for modifying his ancestors' aesthetics. Such hereditary sounds emerged within *gharana* lineages that were formed in the early nineteenth-century. Typically, *gharana*s create distinct artistic identities by maintaining a specific set of musical characteristics across multiple generations. For example, vocalists in the Agra *gharana* created a consistent musical persona by maintaining a style of open-throated vocal projections over the past six generations. Almost every other *gharana* reflects this process in which collective identity emerges through the maintenance of distinct musical sounds. Conversely, vocalists in the Benares *gharana* create a unified audible identity by hybridizing a diversity of musical characteristics instead of perpetuating a singular stylistic sound. For instance, while taking voice lessons in Calcutta, I learned about the ways in which Benares *gharana* vocalists integrated the melodic sentiments of semi-classical genres with formal structures from high-classical genres. I explore such examples of musical hybridity in the Benares *gharana* by outlining two broad categories of sociomusical activity in the early nineteenth-century. Afterwards, I situate my ethnographic data on the musical identity of the Benares *gharana* within the interstitial space between these two broad categories. To offer an interpretive solution to the ambiguity of this in-between identity, I deploy the history of musical patronage in the Mughal Empire and examine the transformations were enacted by British colonialism. Finally, I argue that the interstitial musical identity that developed in this colonial period does not conform to the liberal theoretical paradigms of hybridity and liminality; rather, the ambiguous musical identity of the Benares *gharana* demands an understanding of hybridity as a form of hegemony: the musical identity of the Benares *gharana* is an embodiment of the political tool of artistic hybridity that was patronized by two rulers in the city of Benares during the nineteenth century in order to create an insular identity for their citizens that could emerge as an organized political entity to confront British imperialism.

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To Anne, Father, and Frankie

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Prefacing and Acknowledging

Riding in the back seat of an antiquated taxicab through the smoggy streets of Calcutta, I was trying to find my way to an interview with a professional instrumentalist and aficionado of North Indian classical music. Speaking on the phone with this aficionado in a half-broken Indian-English and translating his directions for the taxicab driver into a fully-broken Bengali – *bame ghuriye* ("turn left"), *dane ghurana* ("turn right") – somehow the taxicab driver understood me and I found myself knocking on the front door of a renowned classical musician's apartment. When Adesh Chatterjee answered the door,[1] I exchanged with him the special brand of awkward and incomplete pleasantries that I had specialized in as an American-born ethnographer trying to be Indian; after this tenuous introduction, we came into our own and began talking about music. In particular, we spoke about the distinct stylistic approach to vocal music that was employed by a lineage of classical musicians commonly known as the Benares *gharana*.

Such *gharana*s are often defined as hereditary lineages of North Indian classical musicians who share a collective style or approach to musical performance that is unique enough to distinguish their lineage from every other *gharana* (Neuman 1980: 146). While I was interviewing Adeshda about the stylistic identity of the Benares *gharana*, he rearticulated a critique that I had often heard – namely, that Benares *gharana* vocalists do not constitute a real *gharana* because they have not created an audibly distinct musical identity. When I inquired into this "unreal" aspect of the Benares *gharana*, I found that Adeshda – and many of the other musicians that I interviewed – argued that the Benares vocalists hybridized a diversity of musical characteristics and therefore did not have a distinct audible identity. But why did musical

[1] Adesh Chatterjee is a pseudonym for the musician who did not wish to be identified.

hybridity prevent the Benares *gharana* vocalists from constructing a distinct musical style? Why was it so obvious to Adeshada that musical hybridity was incompatible with *gharana* identity? Is there something inherent in the process of borrowing and integrating that precludes the possibility of a distinct identity? Is originality irreconcilable with the practice of mixing? And how did North Indian classical musicians ever develop this aesthetic preference for such "pure" musical identities? In short, why isn't the Benares *gharana* "real"?

My thesis – dedicated to exploring the webs of significance between musical hybridity and *gharana* identity – emerged after 7 weeks of fieldwork in Calcutta, nearly 2 years of independent studies with Tong Soon Lee, and endless nights hunched over a computer with a cup of coffee. The fieldwork would not have been possible without funding from SIRE (Scholarly Inquiry and Research at Emory), CCA (Center for Creativity & Arts), and MMUF (Mellon-Mays Undergraduate Fellowship). The financial support from these organizations allowed me the honor and pleasure of conducting interviews and taking lessons with professional musicians and dancers in Calcutta: Anindya Banerjee, Sanjukta Biswas, Subhra Guha, Manasi Majumdar, Tejendra Majumdar, Indrani Mallick, Bachan Lal Mishra, Mohan Lal Mishra, Prakash Mishra, Subhojyoti Mukherjee, and Purnima Sen. I owe a very special thanks to my vocal teacher, primary informant, and friend – Deepak Mishra – who welcomed me into his family and taught me to sing with as much gusto as he answered my interview questions; more than anything else, I thank Deepkaji for helping me integrate my experiences as a performer and a scholar.

Although the majority of my fieldwork focused on independent interviews and lessons, I also spent considerable time listening to recordings at the Archive of North Indian Classical Music (ANICM) and attending concerts at ITC Sangeet Research Academy (ITC SRA). At ANICM, I am particularly thankful for the time and care that Amlan Dasgupta offered while

patiently answering my endless questions. The executive director at ITC SRA, Ravi Mathur, offered me unrestricted access to the library and allowed me to record numerous concerts; I strived to approach my fieldwork with as much grace and elegance as Mr. Mathur approached his profession as the director of ITC SRA.

Every evening, after spending all day running around between lessons and interviews, I was welcomed into the home of Gora and Maitreyi Mukherjee. I never would have met such a generous and hospitable host family without the assistance of Protima Dutt at the American Institute of Indian Studies. Protimadi not only helped me arrange accommodations with some of the kindest people I met in Calcutta but she also willingly rearranged her schedule and found the time to offer me Bangla language lessons.

Without the guidance and support of my advisor, Tong Soon Lee, I never would have had the opportunity to conduct fieldwork in India or write this thesis. During our first meeting, less than a week after I arrived at Emory University, Tong Soon arranged for my first lesson in North Indian classical music with Kakali Bandyopadhyay, offered to be my academic advisor, and invited me to work on an honors thesis. Some debts can never be fully repaid but at the very least I want to thank Tong Soon for taking a chance on me, refusing to give up, and teaching me how to think and write like an ethnomusicologist. I also want to thank Joyce Flueckiger and Melissa Cox for participating in my defense committee and offering important revisions. Joyce also showed me how to expand my thinking beyond the boundaries of ethnomusicology to consider broader questions in the fields of Indian studies and performance theory. Similarly, I am thankful for Lori Teague's guidance while I was trying to translate my thesis into movement and choreograph an embodied performance of the hybridizing aesthetics that I studied in India.

Without any doubt this rite of passage was mentally, emotionally, and physically draining but I can only imagine that I will remember my years at Emory, my summer in India, and my work with Tong Soon as my first genuine attempt to be a scholar. I hope that all of my teachers in both Atlanta and Calcutta will accept this thesis as an expression of my gratitude for their guidance and a literary performance of *pranam*.

1

Introducing the Study of Music in India

Scholars Who Create Indian Music

Sir William Jones (1746-1794) published the first important English monograph on Indian classical music in 1792: *On the Musical Modes of the Hindus* (Farrell 1997: 23). In the two hundred and twenty years that have passed since this colonial judge first wrote about subcontinental music, the Western study of audible art in India has transformed dramatically. While this professional magistrate approached music as a branch of science and analyzed the tetrachords that constructed "Hindu scales", a 20th century anthropologist named Daniel Neuman approached Indian classical music as a social phenomenon and filled his appendices with kinship diagrams.[1] In line with Jones' scientific conceptualization of music, contemporary musicologists educated in India tend to study music as an "object" by employing scientific methodologies: at the turn of the twenty-first century, Rao (2000: 62-5) analyzed North Indian classical *raga*s with computer programs such as the "Fundamental Pitch Extractor" and the "LVS system" that was based on the "subharmonic summation algorithm". Although there certainly are publications from Indian musicologists that approach music less scientifically, the anthropological or sociological interpretation of Indian music is largely situated within the domain of American or

[1] See Farrell (1997: 24) for a quote from Sir William Jones concerning tetrachords and see Neuman (1980: 246-256) for the kinship diagrams.

European educated ethnomusicologists.[2] Moreover, these ethnomusicologists – as students of a discipline that was predicated on a *break* with the objectivity of comparative musicology – are perhaps loath to see thick descriptions of musical sound reduced to the objectivity of computer programs and algorithms.[3] However, ethnomusicological publications on Indian music are not wholly positioned within the anthropological perspective; rather, these works – like every other ethnomusicological work – occupy the interstitial space between musicology and anthropology: Wade's (1984) monograph on the kinship networks that were first studied by Daniel Neuman, expands upon Neuman's anthropological perspective by saturating its discussions with musical transcriptions. With this integrative gesture, Wade provides a model for future ethnomusicological work in India by letting her anthropological interpretations emerge from the *sounds* of music. Descending from these scholarly predecessors, my honors thesis on the musical identity of one North Indian kinship network – the Benares *gharana* – develops within the interstitial space of ethnomusicology but is situated closer to Neuman than Wade: I interpret the musical sounds that I studied in Calcutta through cultural theories, colonial histories, social organizations, and genre distinctions.

While Wade's publication on kinship networks offered a model for ethnomusicology in India, it also offered the first major analysis of a specific genre of North Indian classical music. The high classical vocal genre known as *khyal* that she discussed in this publication was actually

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[2] See Witzleben's (1997) article that questions the divide between Western ethnomusicology and Asian musicology. See Deshpande (1973) for an example of an Indian musicologist who approaches music less scientifically.

[3] See Merriam (1960 & 1977) for an outline of the disciplinary development of ethnomusicology as a break with comparative musicology.

the central musical substance that provided the foundation for many of Neuman's kinship networks. Similar ethnomusicological studies on the sociocultural aspects of North Indian music explored the light classical genres of *qawwali* and *thumri*. [4] As the immediate successors of Wade, these scholars of light classical genres ubiquitously used musical transcriptions and employed anthropological and historical interpretations to explain musical sound. For instance, Manuel (1989: 192-3; 1986: 481) interpreted the presentation of pitches in *thumri* performances as an extension of the socially and historically constructed aesthetics for this specific genre. Additional monographs emerging from the study of genre categorizations have discussed the venerated high classical genre of *dhrupad* and the historically reconstructed medieval genre of *prabandha*.[5]

Classical musicians in North India create audible differences between these separate vocal genres through distinct approaches to the performance of rhythm and pitch. Since these musical qualities are open to objective interpretations, Indian musicologists have predictably produced the vast majority of research on these specific performative features. Although Rao's (2000) utilization of computer programs and algorithms is an extreme example, almost all of these Indian publications employ sophisticated taxonomies to distinguish between one set of musical sounds and another.[6] While earlier works emerging from the Western discipline of comparative musicology treated Indian pitch with similar taxonomic objectivity, Western

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[4] See Qureshi (1986) and Manuel (1989)

[5] See Rowell (1994) and Sanyal & Widdess (2004)

[6] For examples, see Danielou (1987) and Deva (1981)

publications in the twenty-first century concerning Indian rhythmic features gesture towards anthropology through the ethnographic caste study.[7]

With a characteristic sense of sophisticated taxonomy, an eminent critic of Indian music, Karnani (2005), positions the canonic genres of North Indian classical music and accompanying performance practices within distinct social organizations or *gharana*s. Many of these sociomusical lineages are synonymous with the kinship networks described by Neuman and Wade; however, for these Western ethnomusicologists the *gharana* is presented as an extension of descriptive ethnography whereas for Karnani the *gharana* becomes an analytic framework that is applied across genres and social castes with an apparent lack of discretion. One of the canonic publications on *gharana*s that Karnani evidently opposed was written by the Indian musicologist, Deshpande (1973): this relatively early work provides a refreshingly ambiguous and sociologically informed understanding of music that is uncommon in the Indian musicological literature.

While this history of research on the musical and social categories of *gharana*s, rhythms, pitches, and genres helped me understand the sounds that I heard in Calcutta, my readings on nineteenth century colonial history and the cultural theories of Homi Bhabha and Victor Turner helped me interpret the sociomusical phenomena that I studied in North India. In line with Neuman's anthropological work on *gharana*s, I argue that these kinship networks emerged in response to the political and technological transformations that were enacted through British imperialism. Furthermore, I use the theories of postcolonial hybridity and ritual process to create

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[7] For examples of comparative musicological discussions of pitch see Jairazbhoy (1971) and Kaufmann (1968); for an example of an ethnomusicologically informed theory of North Indian rhythm see Clayton (2000).

a thicker description and deeper understanding of the musical traditions that were developed in the colonial context. In particular, I explore the liberal underpinnings of Bhabha's theory on postcolonial hybridity and Turner's theory on liminality in the ritual process to show that these two frameworks for understanding interstitially prevent an understanding of hegemonic hybridity. In this sense, my honors thesis begins by outlining the two broad categories of sociomusical activities that are discussed in the literature but which I also experienced while fieldworking in Calcutta. Afterwards, I situate my ethnographic data on the musical identity of one specific kinship network within the interstitial space between these two broad sociomusical categories. To offer an interpretive solution to the ambiguity of this kinship identity, I deploy the history of musical patronage in North Indian royal courts and the resultant transformations that descended from the advent of European financial investments and political domination. Finally, I argue that the interstitial musical identity that developed in this colonial period does not conform to the liberal theoretical paradigms of postcolonial hybridity and ritual process; rather, the ambiguous musical identity that developed in the nineteenth century demands an understanding of hybridity as a form of hegemony.

Although I begin with descriptions of musical sounds that could be deciphered by the musicians who taught me about their tradition and profession, I end in a theoretical landscape that would likely be confusing to the likes of Deepak Mishra, his brother, Prakash Mishra, or his father, Mohan Lal Mishra. In this sense, as an "outsider" imposing the framework of Western scholarship upon the "natives" in a foreign land, I am an academic descendant of the colonial judge, Sir William Jones, who first attempted to understand the musical modes of Hindus. However, this is not to say that Rao's perspective as an "Indian" musicologist and his use of the Fundamental Pitch Extractor would be anymore decipherable to Deepak Mishra and his kin;

rather, Rao – as a product of the transplantation of British education in India – is also an academic offspring of Sir William Jones. Yet, unlike Jones and Rao, before I departed for my stint of employment as a fieldworker in Calcutta, a professor from Colorado College taught me about cultural relativism and a professor from Emory University, without ever stating it explicitly, helped me realize that my training in scientific methodology would be irrelevant in the study of ethnomusicology. In this sense, although it is nearly impossible to succeed, my theoretical gestures and historical interpretations of Indian musical categories emerge from an attempt to understand music *within* or *with* India.

I make these statements with the risk of being redundant to any graduate students or professors of ethnomusicology or anthropology. But assuming – or more realistically, hoping – that some undergraduate as confused by the discipline of ethnomusicology as I am may one day skim these hundred odd pages, it will be important for him or her to understand that I am not studying Indian music; I am creating Indian music. For me, the musical identity of an Indian *gharana* becomes an embodiment of the political tool of artistic hybridity that was patronized by two rulers in the city of Benares during the nineteenth century in order to create an insular identity for their citizens that could emerge as an organized political entity to confront British imperialism.

Figure 1.1: Map of India with the important cities that I will mention.

2

Organizing Musics and Musicians in North India

A Sociomusical Framework for Classical Music in the Nineteenth Century

Sounds and Performers

A genre of vocal music from the late sixteenth century, known as *dhrupad*, is the oldest style of classical music that is still heard in North India today (Sanyal & Widdess 2004: xiii & 45-7; Wade 1979: 159).[1] Although the first millennium musical forbearer of *dhrupad*, a genre known as *prabandha*, resides in historic obscurity (Rowell 1978: 136; Wade 1979: 159), the musical offspring of *dhrupad*, a genre known as *khyal*, has dominated vocal performance since the early nineteenth century (Wade 1979: 169; Wade 1984: vii).[2] During the same period in which *khyal* began monopolizing the royal courts of Mughal emperors, a "light classical" genre known as *thumri* gained prominence in courtesan salons through performances by female entertainers (Manuel 1986: 471; Manuel 1989: ix).[3] Although *dhrupad* experienced a decline in

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[1] Sanyal & Widdess' (2004) *Dhrupad* offers the most comprehensive treatment of this seminal genre.

[2] Rowell's discussions of *prabandha* (1992: 269-294; 1987: 136-172) tackle the obscurities of this genre by interpreting an incomplete and damaged text, *Brhaddesi*, which was compiled at the end of the first millennium.

[3] The national organization, All India Radio, uses the nomenclature "light classical" as an umbrella category to classify certain musical genres (Neuman 1978: 221).

popularity, *khyal* and *thumri* have maintained positions as two of the most popular genres of aristocratic music in contemporary India (Manuel 1989: ix; Owens 1987: 169; Wade 1979: 169).

Throughout this dynamic two thousand year history – beginning in the first millennium with *prabandha* and continuing into the twenty-first century with *khyal* and *thumri* – North Indian classical vocal music was defined through the organization and classification of sounds and performers. The musical sounds produced during performances were classified not only by genre but also by *raga* and *tala* (roughly "melodic mode" and "rhythmic cycle") (Wade 1984: 11; Manuel 1989: 1, 145 & 192). Within the genres of *khyal* and *thumri*, specific approaches to these two classifications of musical sounds were framed within social organizations known as *gharana*s and *biradari*s (Neuman 1978: 211-2; Neuman 1980: 162-3: Wade 1984: 2). The performers that comprised these social organizations were divided between two hierarchical specialties: *kalawant*s (or "soloists") were situated within prestigious and stylistically distinct *gharana* lineages while *mirasi*s (or "accompanists") congregated in expansive and marginalized *biradari* networks (Neuman 1978: 193-6). In this chapter, I will describe some of the basic concepts in North Indian classical music and suggest that there were two distinct approaches to these musical concepts. This preliminary outline will set the stage for the second chapter in which I will describe the Benares *gharana* as existing betwixt and between these distinct approaches.

Performing Sounds: *Raga*s or "Melodic Modes"

*Raga*s have provided pitch materials and melodic motifs for North Indian classical vocal performances since the development of *prabandha* in the first millennium (Rowell 1987: 137). Although *raga*s resemble scales and melodies from the tradition of Western classical music,

there is no single term from Western theory that encompasses the diversity of musical, emotional, spiritual, and temporal elements embodied in a *raga* (Jairazbhoy 1971: 28; Kaufmann 1968: v; Wade 1979: 56).

From a purely musical perspective, *raga*s typically consist of at least five to seven notes, two of which are singled out as the most prominent and most frequently heard: the *vadi* and *samvadi* (Jairazbhoy 1971: 42; Bor 1999: 2).[4] Although Wade (1979: 65) has cautioned against definitive statements concerning pitch hierarchy in North Indian classical music, the vocalists with whom I conducted ethnography utilized these terms to refer to the most important note and the second most important note in a *raga*. Moreover, in one of the most comprehensive analyses of India *raga*s, Kaufmann (1968) utilized *vadi* and *samvadi* and the accompanying hierarchical implications when describing hundreds of *raga*s.

In each *raga*, the *vadi* and *samvadi* are combined with supporting pitches in a series of characteristic melodic phrases or motifs (Bor 1999: 2). These brief passages, otherwise known as *pakad*, shape the musical identity of a *raga* by providing a corpus of distinct motivic phrases that performers develop to evoke the unique characteristics of a *raga* (*ibid*.). In this sense, *raga*s are created through the adherence to specific pitches and also through the development of those pitches within distinct *pakad* phrases. Moreover, these *pakad* phrases are such critical elements in the audible identity of a *raga* that there are instances in which two *raga*s with the exact same notes and are only differentiated through *pakad*. For example, in **Figure 2.1** *raga* Bageshri and *raga* Bahar have identical notes but are still considered separate *raga*s. Although the *pakad*

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[4] Kaufmann (1968) provides the most comprehensive discussion of *raga*s produced by any Western scholar.

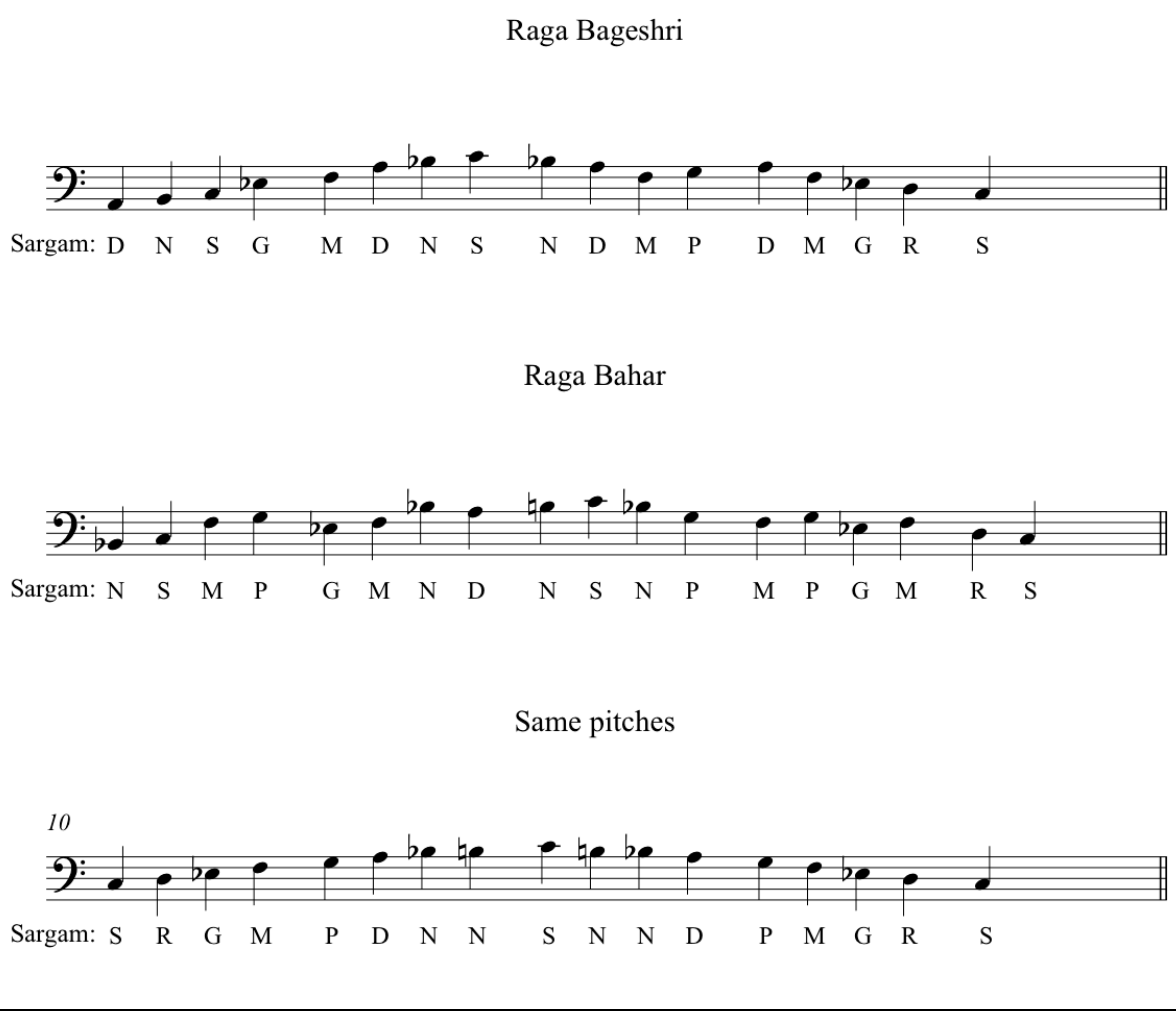

Figure 2.1: The first two transcriptions depict *raga* Bageshri and *raga* Bahar; the third transcription shows that these two *raga*s have the same notes.

phrases are not outlined in these pedagogical passages, the ascending and descending lines of each *raga* allude to the shape of the *pakad*; in other words, the uneven scalar skips and turns depicted in **Figure 2.1** demonstrate that *pakad* phrases are such integral components that they modify the ways in which *raga*s are sung during practice.

While these strictly musical qualities of North Indian *raga*s may be relatively straightforward to the Western musicologist, associated emotional, spiritual, and temporal characteristics may be less familiar. The vast majority of *raga*s are connected to particular times

of day, specific deities in the Hindu pantheon, and distinct categories of sentiments, known as *rasa*s (Bor 1999: 1; Kaufmann 1968: v; Wade 1979: 75).[5] In addition, smaller subsections of *raga*s are connected to specific seasons in the year: for example, *raga* Malahari and *raga* Desh are typically performed during the rainy season (Danielou 1987: 236).

There is a significant amount of scholarship directed towards circadian classifications of Indian *raga*s: for instance, Kaufmann (1968: 16) shows that *raga*s performed at the same time of day tend to incorporate similar or nearly identical pitches. Furthermore, North Indian musicologists have traditionally divided the twenty-four hour day into eight separate sections of three hours each. Each of these eight watches has an associated set of *raga*s with distinct pitch characteristics (Wade 1979: 77-78).[6] However, South Indian musicologists have argued that the "time-theory" for *raga*s is at best an accumulation of advisories rather than a systematic taxonomy of prescriptive requirements (Sambamoorthy 2002: 245). This flexible approach to circadian *raga* classifications was reflected during my own vocal lessons in Calcutta: although my *guru*s typically taught me one *raga* for the morning and another for the evening, I was told that if I could not find the time to practice twice a day that I should disregard the temporal classifications and sing both *raga*s at the same time. In this instance, there seems to be a divide between detailed musical theories that classify similar sounding *raga*s within distinct circadian units and flexible sociomusical applications of these musical categorizations.

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[5] Rao (2000) describes the associations between *raga*s and *rasa*s through historical and scientific perspectives; his experimental scientific approach is intriguing since it offers methodological and analytical frameworks not commonly employed by Western ethnomusicologists.

[6] Danielou (1987) discusses the musical characteristics of over forty different *raga*s and situates each *raga* within a seasonal or circadian category.

During performances, musicians will typically remain within the pitch limitations of a single *raga* for the entirety of a composition. Similarly, in concert programs performers tend to utilize related *raga*s in order to create a sense of musical unity and continuity that weaves together the various compositions in a program. While performers of high classical genres are expected to adhere to the pitch limitations of a selected *raga*, performers of light classical genres typically draw on pitches and *pakad* phrases from neighboring or distant *raga*s (Manuel 1989: 192-3). The flexibility of *raga* rendition in light classical performance does not reflect upon individual deficits in musical training but rather expresses the languorous aesthetics in these accessible genres (*ibid*.: 193; Manuel 1986: 481). Although, in theory, *raga*s are constructed through distinct combinations of pitches, *pakad* phrases, circadian classifications, and specific emotional resonances, in practice, these theoretical abstractions are incompletely applied through individual performances, vocal lessons, or genre aesthetics.

Performing Sounds: *Tala*s or "Rhythmic Cycles"

Musical time in the North Indian classical tradition is organized within *tala*s or rhythmic cycles. These *tala*s are created from two principle components: a fixed number of beats that are repeated during each cycle and an associated set of accents that subdivide repetitions (Jairazbhoy 1971: 29; Clayton 2000: 47-8).[7] *Tala* nomenclature is usually based upon the fixed number of beats within each repeated cycle: for instance, *tintal* is sixteen beats, *jhumra* is fourteen beats, and *ektal* is twelve beats (Wade 1984: 13). *Tala*s are also defined by three categories of accents

[7] Clayton (2000) comprehensively analyzes *tala*: he uses North Indian rhythm in combination with approaches from Western music theory, ethnomusicology, and cognitive psychology to understand and interpret performance practice.

that are articulated with varying levels of intensity and which differentiate between separate sections of the cycle (Wade 1979: 118-9). *Sam*, which is the first beat in every *tala*, receives the loudest percussive emphasis and typically serves as an important cadential point for melodic passages (Jairazbhoy 1971: 29; Clayton 2000: 22**)**. A secondary degree of emphasis is placed upon the multiple *tali* beats that are generally interspersed throughout the cycle (Jairazbhoy 1971: 29). *Khali*, which is the third type of *tala* accent, counterbalances the volume and intensity of *sam* through the absence of accentuation and perhaps a complete rest. However, the lack of audible sound produced by *khali* is actually another form of emphasis since *khali* is typically the only beat in which the percussionist does not play (Bor 1999: 7). Since the quieter *khali* beat is usually utilized to counterbalance the intensity of *sam*, this rhythmic technique is often placed in the middle of a *tala* cycle (*ibid*.).

Figure 2.2 presents two of the most common *tala*s in North Indian classical music: *tintal* and *ektal*. The quarter notes, eighth notes, and sixteenth notes in these transcriptions illustrate the

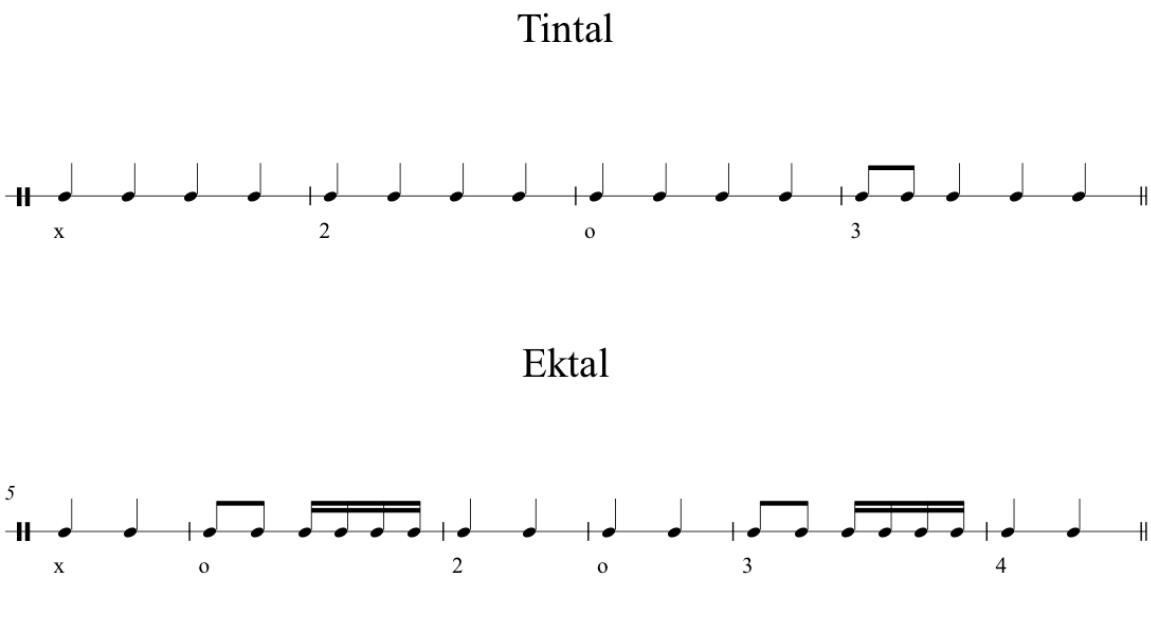

Figure 2.2: Transcriptions of *tintal* and *ektal*, two of the most common North Indian *tala*s.

sixteen beats of *tintal* and the twelve beats of *ektal*. While the use of Western classical notation conveys an outsider's perspective, the symbols and numbers used to mark *sam*, *tali*, and *khali* are widely used within Indian musical notation: x indicates *sam*, o stands for *khali*, and 2, 3, or 4 means *tali*. The bar lines that are synchronized with the symbols for *sam*, *tali*, and *khali* emphasize that each one of these percussive beats articulates a metrical subdivision within the *tala*. For example, in *tintal* there are four groups of four beats each (4+4+4+4); the beginning of each set of four is audibly marked by *sam*, *tali*, or *khali* and visually marked by both a bar line and also by x, 2, o, or 3. Similarly, the twelve beats of *ektal*, which are divided into six groups of two (2+2+2+2+2+2), are also illustrated with bar lines and percussive symbols from Indian musical notation.

The fourth measure of *tintal* along with the second and fifth measures of *ektal* are marked by an increase in rhythmic density. Although these rhythms are usually not performed exactly, these specific measures are often marked by an increase in percussive activity. While the musical parameters outlined in these transcriptions illustrate the two most important qualities of a *tala* – a fixed number of beats and a series of subdividing accents – there are substantial improvisations that obscure these principle components. In other words, although classical performances are built upon rhythmic frameworks, the improvisations that ornament the structures notated in **Figure 2.2** are so elaborate that listeners will probably discern only the accented *sam*, *tali*, and *khali*. In this sense, similar to *raga*s, the theoretical understanding and description of *tala*s is only partially apparent in performance practices. The rigid or flexible performances of *raga*s and *tala*s are typically situated within two distinct genres: *thumri* and *khyal*. By further exploring these genres and the specific performance practices that are unique to each approach, I want to show that there were two distinct conventions for vocal music in the nineteenth century.

Sounding Performances: The Light Classical Genre of *Thumri*

Classical vocal musics in North India are usually divided between light classical genres and high classical genres. In light classical performances the lyrics tend to be more important while in high classical performances the strictly audible elements come to the fore (Qureshi 1986: 46-7). Among the well-known classical genres depicted in **Figure 2.3**, *khyal* and *thumri*

North Indian Classical Vocal Music	
High classical music	Light classical music
dhrupad *khyal* *tarana*	*thumri* *tappa* *dadra* *ghazal* *qawwali*

Figure 2.3: Distinguishing high classical genres from and light classical genres of vocal music.

are especially popular and ubiquitous in North Indian vocal concerts (Wade 1979: 158-9). As a light classical genre, *thumri* is often described as the sentimental and musically accessible alternative to the esoteric and artistically challenging *khyal* renditions (Manuel 1986: 481). The defining features of *thumri* include not only these accessible attributes but also unique structural arrangements, flexible approaches to *raga* renditions, characteristic lyrical declamations, and historical associations with courtesan entertainers.

Although Manuel (1986: 470-1) has dated the earliest counterpart of *thumri* to the 9th century, this light classical genre as we know it today was first appreciated and cultivated in its own right during the 18th century. While emerging and maturing as a vocal genre, *thumri* incorporated elements from its rural history as a dance song with musical influences from the burgeoning high classical style of *khyal* (*ibid.*). The primary exponents of *thumri* during its developmental period were female entertainers living and working in the courtesan salons of

Mughal aristocrats (Manuel 1989: 48-51). Although these courtesan professionals "were not considered a part of respectable society… [it was not] wrong or reprehensible even for respectable men to enjoy the company of courtesans" (Mujeeb 1967: 227). However, by the 1830s an emerging middle class that was influenced by puritan Victorianism began expressing anti-courtesan sentiments that culminated in systematic campaigns (Manuel 1986: 477; Chakravorty 2008: 44).[8] Even in the early decades of the 20th century, the association with courtesan culture stigmatized female *thumri* performers as common prostitutes and male *thumri* accompanists as pimps (Manuel 1986: 477-8; Manuel 1989: 72; Chakravorty 2008: 44-5). However, by the 1920s with the decline of courtesan culture and the rise of nationalism, *thumri* was gradually accepted as a part of Indian cultural heritage (Manuel 1986: 478).

Over the course of its dynamic history, the musical developments of *thumri* were usually separated into two distinct styles: *bandish thumri* that originated in Lucknow and *bol banao thumri* that evolved in Benares (Manuel 1989: 97 & 105).[9] Although *bandish thumri* is an important historical and stylistic precedent to *bol banao thumri*, I will only examine the Benares style of *bol banao* since my ethnographic research does not address *bandish thumri*.[10] In addition, unless otherwise noted, many of the claims that I will make in this section are based upon my personal vocal training with musicians in Calcutta who professionally performed the Benares style of *thumri*.

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[8] Chakravorty (2008) focuses on the choreographic analog to *thumri*, *Kathak* dance, which shared many of the historical and stylistic developments of *thumri*.

[9] A detailed stylistic and historical analysis of the two genres is offered in Manuel (1989).

[10] Hereafter, when I use the word "*thumri*" I am specifically referring to *bol banao thumri*.

Alap is the first structural unit of a *thumri* performance and it begins when the solo vocalist starts singing unmetered and melismatic improvisations (**Figure 2.4**).[11] However, before the vocalist presents his first improvisational passage, one or two instrumentalists sitting behind him will start plucking the strings of *tambura*s to create the characteristic drone of Indian classical music. Soon after the vocalist sings his first note, the melodic accompaniment – traditionally the *sarangi* but more recently the harmonium – will start heterophonically imitating the soloist and providing fillers when the soloists takes a break.[12] This improvisatory section usually takes a minute or two at most; when the vocalist decides to move onto the next section he will introduce a melodic phrase with regular metric rhythm. This metered passage serves as a musical cue for the percussive accompanist, *tabla*, to enter and articulate the conclusion of the *alap* section.

The *sthayi* of a *thumri* performance is clearly demarcated from the *alap* through the inclusion of lyrics, metered improvisations on those lyrics, and percussive accompaniment. The lyrics in *sthayi* renditions are typically derived from two lines of poetry written in the Braj bhasha dialect that was historically associated with poetry but is now spoken only in the vicinity of Mathura and Vrindavan (Wade 1973: 445). While singing with Braj bhasha texts, the vocalist will typically focus on the pitches in his middle range and repeatedly improvise text paintings from the first two lines of poetry (Manuel 1989: 140-2). Within these expansive improvisations the vocalist will periodically interject the *mukhra*, which is the only melodic passage that is repeated verbatim throughout the performance. From the perspective of Western music theory,

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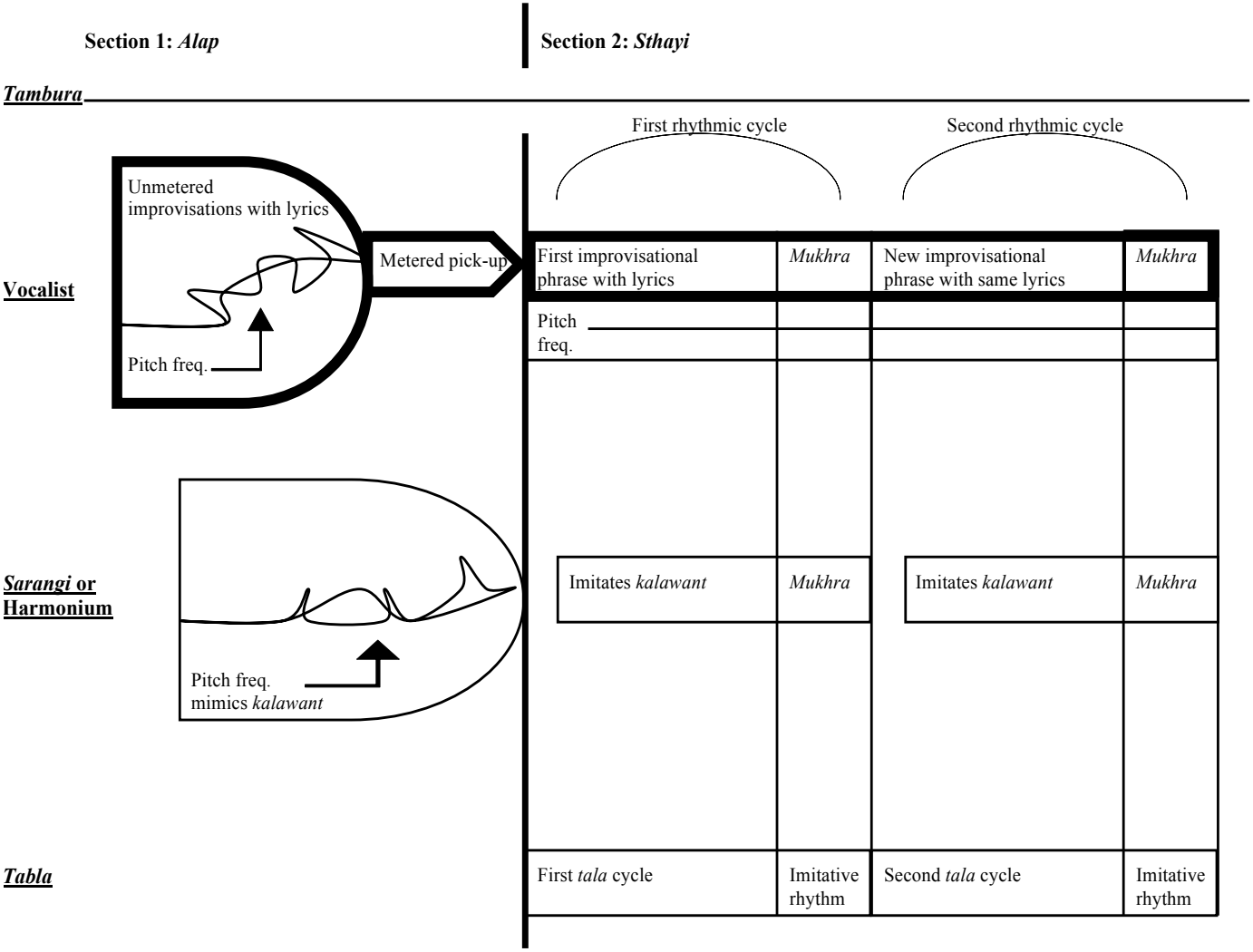
[11] See **Explanation of Figure 2.4**.

[12] The *sarangi* is a bowed chordophone; see Sorrell's (1980) dissertation for an extensive discussion of the techniques used in *sarangi* performance.

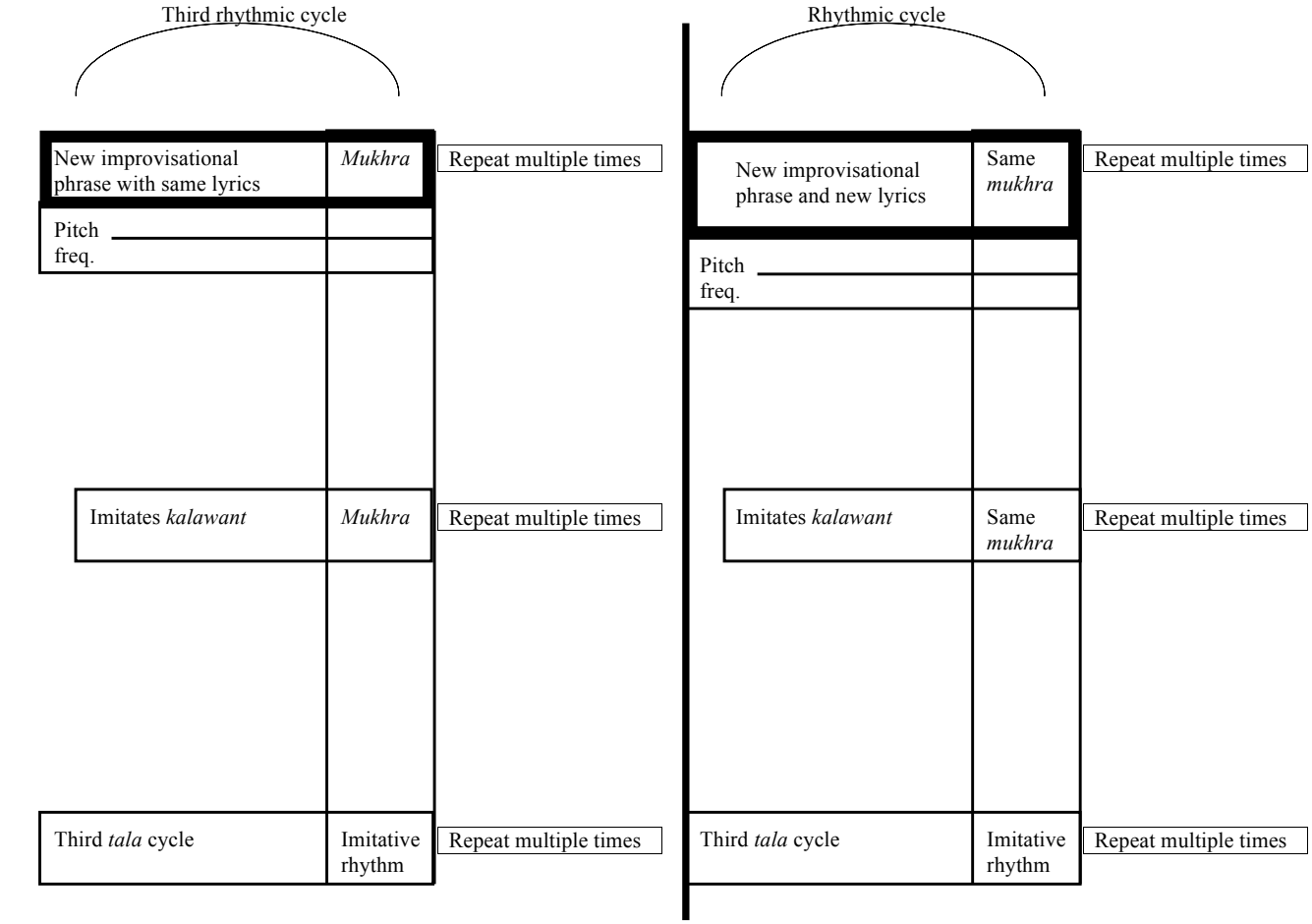
*mukhra*s resemble refrains or brief melodic passages that are repeated at the end of each new verse. In this sense, *thumri* vocalists periodically employ the *mukhra*-refrain to cadence a series of improvisatory verses. Although the vocalist focuses on innovative combinations of improvisation and refrain, the accompanist continues to provide imitative heterophonic support and the *tabla* player cyclically repeats the *tala*.

When the vocalist has reasonably exhausted the first two lines of poetry with improvisational text paintings, he will continue on to additional lyrical material in the *madhya* and *antara* sections. *Madhya* is rooted in the exact same musical processes that are found in *sthayi* renditions; the only difference is that *madhya* improvisations are based on new textual material while the *mukhra* refrains mimetically repeat the musical and lyrical material from the *sthayi*. Similarly, the *antara* section utilizes new lyrical material for improvisations but returns to the *sthayi mukhra* to create cadential refrains. Although the *antara* introduces new textual elements, the most important musical cue for this section is use of higher pitches. When the vocalist suddenly moves into higher octaves and consistently improvises within the upper ranges it is a clear indication for *antara*.

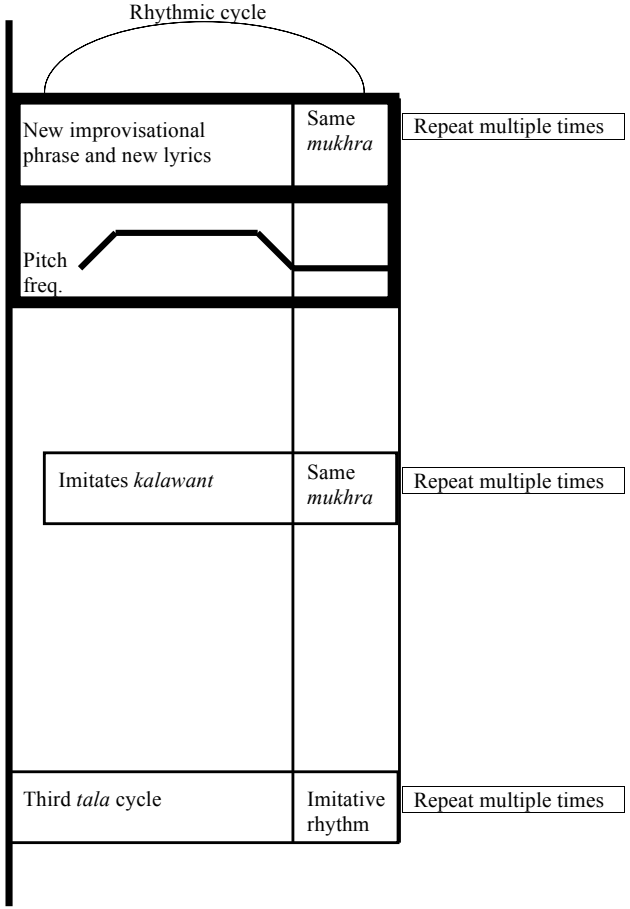
During the final part of a *thumri* composition, known as the *laggi*, the vocalist will move into the position of an accompanist by cyclically repeating the *sthayi mukhra* while the *tabla* performer constructs an elaborate solo by improvising with increased rhythmic density and volume. In this sense, there is a brief status reversal at the end of a *thumri* performance where the accompanist becomes a soloist and the soloist becomes an accompanist. The performance either ends when the *laggi* finishes or when the vocalist returns to his position as soloist by singing a few more passages and bringing the piece to a decisive conclusion.


Section 1: *Alap*
Section 2: *Sthayi*
Tambura
First rhythmic cycle
Second rhythmic cycle
Unmetered improvisations with lyrics
Metered pick-up
Pitch freq.
Vocalist
First improvisational phrase with lyrics
Mukhra
New improvisational phrase with same lyrics
Mukhra
Pitch freq.
Sarangi or Harmonium
Imitates *kalawant*
Mukhra
Imitates *kalawant*
Mukhra
Pitch freq. mimics *kalawant*
Tabla
First *tala* cycle
Imitative rhythm
Second *tala* cycle
Imitative rhythm

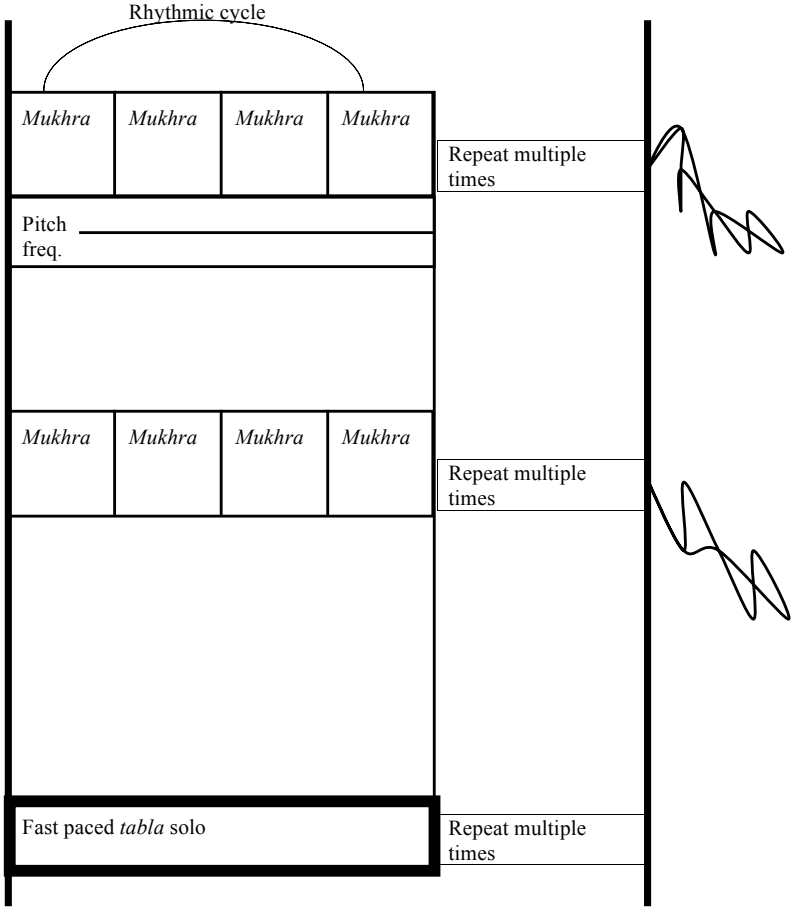
Section 3: *Madhya*



Section 4: *Antara*



Section 5: *Laggi* (*tabla* solo)



Explanation of Figure 2.4: This figure is a diagrammatic representation of a hypothetical *thumri* performance that focuses on illustrating the musical structures and forms rather than the melodic passages or rhythmic articulations. The diagram is divided vertically into four separate musical lines: starting from the top, (1) ***Tambura***, (2) **Vocalist**, (3) ***Sarangi* or Harmonium**, and (4) ***Tabla***. The words and figures that extend horizontally from these four musical lines display structural changes that occur as the *thumri* performance progresses through time. The thickly outlined segments that coalesce in the **Vocalist**'s line until the fifth section are meant to highlight the most important passages. In other words, the musical line for ***Tabla*** is thickly outlined only in **Section 5: *Laggi*** because this section focuses on percussive virtuosity rather than vocal virtuosity.

In **Section 1: *Alap*** the initiating drone of the ***Tambura*** is depicted by the unbroken horizontal line; the unmetered improvisations of the **Vocalist** are expressed through the curving lines within the thickly outlined half-oval; in addition the "metered pick-up" is presented in a pointed rectangle to indicate that it leads into **Section 2: *Sthayi***; the other set of squiggly lines within the slightly offset and thinly outlined half-oval depict the less important imitative heterophony of the ***Sarangi* or Harmonium**. In other words, the musical line for the ***Sarangi* or Harmonium** is positioned slightly to the right of the **Vocalist**'s musical line to indicate that the melodic material presented by the accompanist is derived from the phrases that the **Vocalist** presented only moments before; the ***Tabla*** does not play during **Section 1: *Alap***.

In **Section 2: *Sthayi*** the rectangular shapes that situate each musical line provide a visual representation of the metered structure that is introduced when the ***Tabla*** starts

performing. In this sense, the ridged and angular shapes in **Section 2: *Sthayi*** are meant to contrast with the oblong and curved shapes in **Section 1: *Alap*** where there is no metric or rhythmic architecture. Starting from the top of the diagram, the horizontal line of the ***Tambura*** remains unbroken and unaffected by the introduction of metered rhythm; the downward facing half-oval with the words "First rhythmic cycle" written above indicate that the boxes below are situated within a single *tala* cycle. The thickly outlined vocal passages indicate that the **Vocalist**'s textual improvisatory phrases comprise the most significant musical line; the vertical line that separates the "*Mukhra*" box from the "First improvisational phrase with lyrics" box indicates that this repetitive refrain is distinctly different from the improvisations. The rectangle marked "Pitch freq." shows that the **Vocalist**'s improvisations are generally situated in the middle range. Similar to **Section 1: *Alap***, the slightly offset box for the ***Sarangi* or Harmonium** indicates that the heterophonic imitations presented by the accompanist are derived from the material that the **Vocalist** sang only moments before. Following the section marked "First rhythmic cycle", there are two other structural units marked "Second rhythmic cycle" and "Third rhythmic cycle": this repetition illustrates that the only changes from one section to the next are the vocalists improvisational phrases that are depicted in thickly outlined rectangles labeled, "New improvisational phrase with same lyrics". Assuming that the reader understands this repetitive pattern, the rest of the sections in this hypothetical transcription are only marked with "Repeat multiple times".

Section 3: *Madhya* utilizes all of the same illustrative techniques to graphically represent a *thumri* performance. In **Section 4: *Antara*** there is only one novel illustration presented in the rectangle marked "Pitch freq.": within this rectangle, the line representing pitch initially ascends and subsequently descends before entering the box beneath the segment

labeled "Same *mukhra*". The contours of this line show that the **Vocalist** raises his pitch during the *antara* section and subsequently descends to the lower octave while repeating the *mukhra* from the *sthayi* section. This passage is situated within a thickly outlined rectangle to indicate that the **Vocalist**'s raised pitch is an important development in the *antara* section.

The prominence of the ***Tabla*** passage in **Section 5: *Laggi*** is graphically displayed by the thick outline surrounding the rectangle marked "Fast paced *tabla* solo"; furthermore, the decreased significance of the **Vocalist**'s line is illustrated through the thinly outlined boxes in the vocal segment; the two squiggly lines that extend past the thick vertical line, which marks the end of the performance, shows that the **Vocalist** and ***Sarangi* or Harmonium** may present a final and brief descending passage after the *laggi* cadences.

Although the preceding structural analysis depicts *thumri* as a consistent and standardized musical genre, this specific artistic style is actually marked by musical flexibility. While the compositions are based on specified and well-known poems, the vocalists are generally expected to include additional phrases and interjections such as "*hae* Rama" ("O Rama") or "*sanvariya*" ("lover") (Manuel 1989: 105). Similarly, there is hardly any pre-composed melodic material that accompanies the lyrics; whereas in high classical genres such as *khyal*, there is typically a melodic outline to accompany the text. In *thumri*, not only are these melodies and phrases composed on the spot (*ibid*.) but also the cyclically repeated *mukhra* is initially improvised before it is settled on as a consistent musical structure. Furthermore, as previously discussed in the section concerning *raga*s, *thumri* performances render *raga*s in an exceedingly liberal fashion where vocalists borrow pitches and *pakad* phrases from neighboring and distantly related *raga*s. *Tala* is also an extremely flexible musical component in *thumri* performances: Manuel

(1989: 109) quotes a vocalist and composer named Anil Biswas (1914-2003) who states, "The *tala* didn't matter to us: any [composition] could be sung in [any *tala*]; we would just tell the [*tabla* performer] to start playing."[13] In this instance, the cyclic temporal structures of North Indian classical music seem to be surprisingly obscured in the genre of *thumri*. Not only is time obscured but integral components such as lyrical poetry, repeated structural phrases, and *raga*s are also approached with artistically liberal perspectives.

While this flexible approach to melodic, rhythmic, and lyric elements help create the distinct flavor of *thumri*, there are a few relatively standardized ways in which vocalists produce characteristically *thumri* sounds. One of the most distinctive techniques is a style of syllabic declamation where vocalists quickly but intelligibly articulate sequential syllables of the poetic text on the same pitch (Manuel 1989: 121). In other words, the vocalist sings multiple words with one note.[14] The intensity of pitch repetition and the absence of melismatic phrasing that is presented through this unique technique is rather foreign in high classical performances such as *khyal* (*ibid*.). Moreover, this syllabic declamation differentiates *thumri* as a light classical genre since it prioritizes the pronunciation and intelligibility of lyrics over the innovative shape of a melodic improvisation (*ibid*.: 134-5).[15]

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[13] Anil Biswas was a renowned film composer who "struck the rare balance between classical purity of music and popular pulse" (Mydans 2003).

[14] For a transcription of this characteristic technique in Western staff notation see Example 11 in Manuel (1989: 121).

[15] Also refer to Qureshi (1986: 46-7) for a genre taxonomy of North Indian classical music and consider her reasons for classifying the style of *qawwali* as "song".

Another set of characteristic vocal techniques that demarcate a passage of music as distinctly *thumri* include five styles of rapid ornamentations: *khatka*, *kana*, *murki*, *mir*, and *pukar* (Manuel 1989: 121-2).[16] Although Manuel (*ibid*.: 121) does not include *mir* among the rapid ornamentations that are characteristic of *bol banao thumri*, two of the vocalists who I was studying with in Calcutta and one of the aficionados that I interviewed, agreed that *mir* was a key audible indicator for *thumri*. While *mir* is used in *khyal* and other high classical genres, it is employed with greater frequency and different expressive intentions in *thumri*. However, in any of these genres, the presentation of *mir* can be comfortably translated into Western musical terminology as an extended glissando. Similarly, *murki* is analogous to a rapid trill from Western classical music that extends above and below a focal pitch. *Khatka*, *kana*, and *pukar*, on the other hand, do not relate to Western music as easily: rather, *khatka* may be interpreted as a quick but delicately rendered melodic passage that departs from and subsequently returns to a specific scalar region (*ibid*.). Somewhat similarly, "*kana* (literally, "a minute bit") refers to a short, abrupt turn on a note, most commonly followed by a descending glide" (*ibid*.: 123). *Pukar* (literally, "call") refers to ascending passages that exponentially increase in volume before arriving on climatic pitches. While discussing this vocal technique, Manuel (*ibid*.: 122) mentions a conversation he had with an accomplished vocalist and former director of All India Radio who described *pukar* as "the expression of the soul's yearning for divine union, when an ineffable urge comes from within one's being and calls for salvation." This dramatic interpretation of an explicitly *thumri* technique reflects the general appreciation of *thumri* as a "sweet" and accessible genre of music (Manuel 1986: 481) that is "justifiably regarded as being a more

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[16] Refer to Manuel (1989: 122-3) for transcriptions of *khatka*, *kana*, *murki*, and *pukar* in Western staff notation.

sentimental genre than the more abstract *khyal*" (Manuel 1989: 136). In this sense, the light classical genre of *thumri* embodies many of the musical and social characteristics that were contrasted with *khyal* and the people who patronized and performed this high classical genre of music.

Sounding Performances: The High Classical Genre of *Khyal*

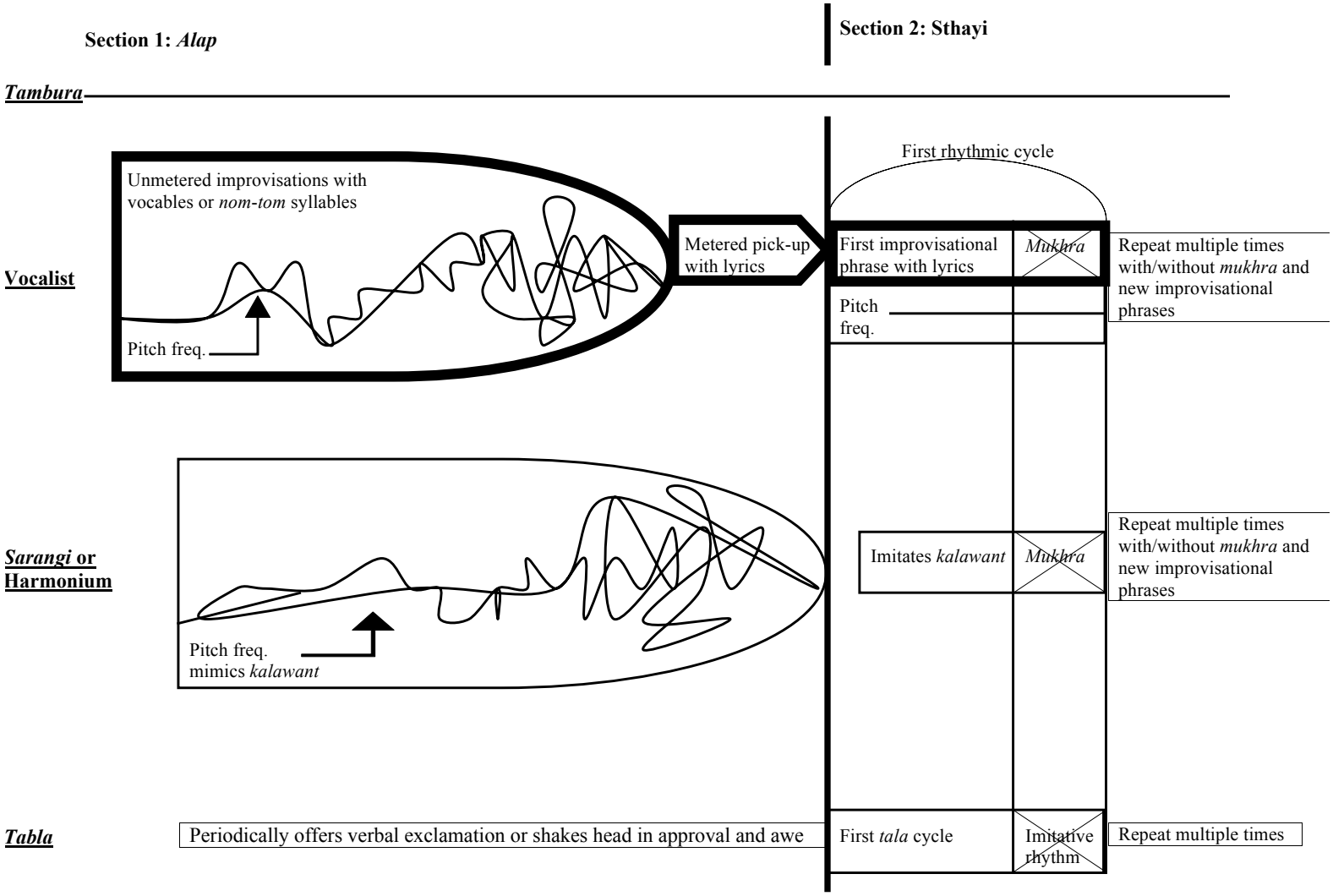
The high classical genre known as *khyal* is derived from a word in Arabic that means imagination (Wade 1984: 11). Although this vocal genre resembles *thumri* in the sense that both genres are improvisatory, the etymology of *khyal* emphasizes the degree to which improvisation defines this genre. Furthermore, the linguistic connection to Arabic reflects the widespread cultivation and patronization of *khyal* by Muslim aristocrats in the princely courts of Mughal emperors. Since the early eighteenth century, when *khyal* was first recognized in the courts of an emperor named Muhammad Shah (*ibid*.: 6), its improvisatory nature has shaped the genre into an innovative high classical vocal style with minimal limitations and a diversity of artistic approaches (*ibid*.: 35). Contrary to *thumri* performances, these innovative *khyal* renditions strictly adhere to the limitations of *raga* and *tala* but freely interpret the texts as vehicles for a unique set of melodic improvisations known as *tan*s. These prominent improvisations are situated within four distinct sections that bear resemblance to the divisions of *thumri* (**Figure 2.5**).[17]

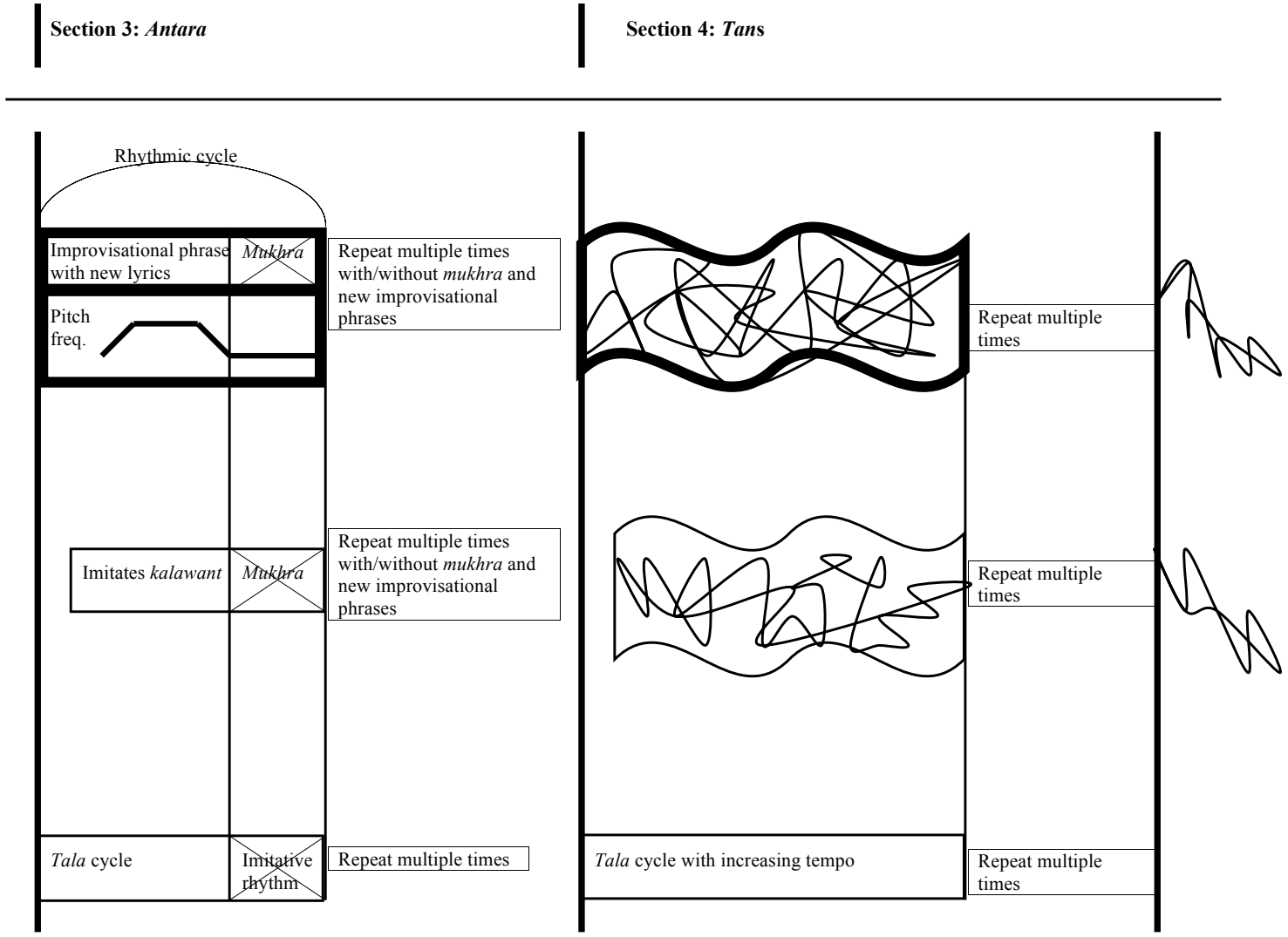
Alap is the first section in a *khyal* rendition and it begins when the vocalist starts singing unmetered improvisations with accompaniment from the droning *tambura*s and imitative *sarangi* or harmonium performers. However, rather that presenting a brief *alap* in the *thumri* style with

[17] See **Explanation of Figure 2.5**.

linguistically meaningless vowels, *khyal* performers will extend the *alap* for 30 minutes or more while singing *nom-tom* syllables that allude to sixteenth century genres and derive from Sanskrit mantras (Sanyal & Widdess 2004: 152-3; Wade 1984: 30 & 107-16). Furthermore, the rhythmic densities of these *nom-tom* improvisations typically increase exponentially as the *alap* progresses. Although lengthy *alap* renditions with *nom-tom* are increasingly rare in the contemporary repertoire, modern *alap* performances in *khyal* tend to be much longer than the *thumri* counterparts.

To transition out of the *alap* and into the *sthayi* section, *khyal* vocalists introduce melodic phrases with regular metric rhythms and poetic texts. Similar to *thumri* performances, the *sthayi* section of a *khyal* rendition is clearly announced with Braj bhasha lyrics, percussive accompaniment and metered improvisations in the vocalist's middle range. However, contrary to *thumri*, the *khyal* style of *sthayi* deemphasizes text painting, infrequently employs repetitive *mukhra*s, and utilizes a pre-composed melody. Although this melody is relatively standardized, vocalists freely interpret the composition and seldom sing the melodic passages verbatim. When the vocalist has thoroughly explored the pre-composed melody in the *sthayi* and presented a variety of derived improvisations, he will transition into the rhythmic *antara* and start singing in a higher octave (Wade 1984: 20). The *antara* is rooted in the exact same musical processes that are found in *sthayi* renditions; however, there is a new stanza of lyrical poetry in Braj bhasha with an accompanying pre-composed melody. Although there is no *madhya* section in *khyal* performances, it is possible to have two *antara* sections (Wade 1984: 14). While the vocalist is inventing improvisatory passages and interpreting sections from the pre-composed melodies of the *sthayi* and *antara*, the melodic accompanist continues to provide imitative heterophonic support and the *tabla* player cyclically repeats the rhythmic cycles.


Section 1: *Alap*
Section 2: Sthayi
Tambura
Vocalist
Unmetered improvisations with vocables or *nom-tom* syllables
Pitch freq.
Metered pick-up with lyrics
First rhythmic cycle
First improvisational phrase with lyrics
Mukhra
Repeat multiple times with/without *mukhra* and new improvisational phrases
Pitch freq.
Sarangi or Harmonium
Pitch freq. mimics *kalawant*
Imitates *kalawant*
Mukhra
Repeat multiple times with/without *mukhra* and new improvisational phrases
Tabla
Periodically offers verbal exclamation or shakes head in approval and awe
First *tala* cycle
Imitative rhythm
Repeat multiple times


Section 3: *Antara*
Section 4: *Tans*
Rhythmic cycle
Improvisational phrase with new lyrics
Mukhra
Repeat multiple times with/without *mukhra* and new improvisational phrases
Pitch freq.
Repeat multiple times
Imitates *kalawant*
Mukhra
Repeat multiple times with/without *mukhra* and new improvisational phrases
Repeat multiple times
Tala cycle
Imitative rhythm
Repeat multiple times
Tala cycle with increasing tempo
Repeat multiple times

Explanation of Figure 2.5: This figure uses the exact same graphical techniques from **Figure 2.4** to diagrammatically illustrate the musical structures in a hypothetical *khyal* performance. There are only three new graphic symbols that are presented in this figure: (1) in **Section 2: Sthayi**, the two diagonal lines that cross out the boxes marked as "*Mukhra*" indicate that these refrain segments are optional; (2) in **Section 4: *Tan*s** the warped and waving rectangles represent the increased and unpredictable melodic variability that is created in this section through the extensive use of virtuosic *tan*s. (3) The twisting and turning lines that are situated within in the warped rectangles illustrate the diverse array of pitches that are used to create *tan*s.

In the final section of a *khyal* performance, the vocalist transitions into a purely improvisatory arena with continued melodic and percussive accompaniment. This section is typically much longer and more important than the preceding *alap*, *sthayi*, and *antara*. Furthermore, the improvisations in this section reach a maximum rhythmic density and usually culminate at the vocalist's virtuosic limits. The specific styles of rhythmically dense and virtuosic improvisations that are showcased in this concluding segment are known as *tan*s. Although *tan*s are ubiquitous in North Indian classical music, previous studies have demonstrated the difficulties encountered by trying to define this musical element. For example, while describing performance practices in India, Wade (1979: 174) states, "*Tan*s are very fast melodic figures… borne on the vowels of text syllables or on independent vowels, usually *a*." However, when returning to this definition five years later, Wade (1984: 28) acknowledges, "a 'fast melodic figure' can be almost anything. The matter of *tan*s is very confusing, and

descriptions are unclear for the terms used." Given the difficulty of describing *tan*s through seemingly objective musical terminology, Wade offers three different metaphorical descriptions: "'Roller-coaster' *tan*s, those in which one 'phrase' encompasses several successive ascents and descents"; "'plateau' *tan*s in which each pitch in a series is sustained by a fast vibrato, creating the illusion of speed by ornamentation rather than by melodic motion"; and "'like a string of pearls', or ornamented so heavily that the pitches are indistinguishable from one another" (*ibid*.).[18]

These diverse *tan* styles that serve as the climatic conclusion to *khyal* performances clearly diverge from the concluding percussive solo in a *thumri* rendition. In *thumri*, the *laggi* provides a forum for status reversal: the vocalist becomes an accompanist by cyclically repeating the *mukhra* and the percussionist transforms into a soloist by presenting a flashy and virtuosic conclusion. In *khyal*, however, the vocalist maintains his status as a soloist and performs the virtuosic and rapid conclusion through complex and cohesive *tan*s. In this sense, although both genres culminate and conclude with speed, the distinctions on which instrument or individual should perform the final section help delineate between the genres. Furthermore, these genres are differentiated through the performative approaches to *raga*, *tala*, and lyrics: in *thumri* renditions, vocalists freely borrow pitches and *pakad* phrases from a variety of *raga*s while in *khyal* performances, the soloist strictly adheres to the limitations of a single *raga*. Similarly, as mentioned above, the well-know vocalist and composer, Anil Biswas, illustrated the casual approach of *thumri* by describing instances in which he would simply ask the percussionist to

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[18] To accompany these vaguely defined musical passages, Wade (1984) refers the reader to specific transcriptions and recordings that illustrate the key characteristics of these *tan*s: see examples 3-4 in chapter 3, examples 7-1 in chapter 7, and examples 8-4 in chapter 8.

start playing without mentioning a specific *tala*. This contrasts with the importance of *tala* in *khyal* performances where specific *tala*s are traditionally associated with distinct tempos (*ibid*.: 14). Although *khyal* appreciates *raga* and *tala* with rigid reverence, a similar concern for textual integrity is lacking. Vocalists who specialize in *khyal* usually do not know the exact meaning of the words they are singing during performances (*ibid*.: 23). Additionally, the general disregard for text in *khyal* compositions has led many of the well-known poems and lyrics to become codified with bad grammar, mixed dialects, or meaningless words (*ibid*.). In *thumri*, however, the Braj bhasha texts provide meaningful inspirations for text painting improvisations and also inform the unique style of syllabic declamations. In this instance, I suggest that the divergent characteristics and aesthetics of *khyal* and *thumri* provide a window into the distinct ways in which performers were socially organized.

Organizing Performers: *Mirasi*s in *Biradari*s

Properly performing North Indian classical music requires at least two people: the soloist and the accompanist (Neuman 1980: 92). The hierarchical division that separates these two individuals during a musical performance also functions within the social realm. Accompanists are "traditionally low in rank both socially and musically, in contrast to Kalawants [or "soloists"], who are ranked much higher musically" (Neuman 1980: 102). While the soloists are typically *sitar* performers, *sarod* performers, or vocal performers, the accompanists are almost always *tabla* or *sarangi* performers (Neuman 1978: 194; Neuman 1980: 106). Since these two instruments historically accompanied dancing girls who sang *thumri* in courtesan salons, *tabla* and *sarangi* performers were relegated into the marginalized sociomusical caste known as *Mirasi*

(Neuman 1978: 194 & 205).[19] Even in the late 20th century, *Mirasi*s commonly accompanied dancing courtesans and perpetuated the stigma that was traditionally attached to *tabla* and *sarangi* (Neuman 1978: 204).[20] Due to the negative connotations surrounding *Mirasi* status, accompanists occasionally attempted to transcend their sociomusical rank and become soloists in the elite caste of *Kalawant*s (Neuman 1980: 93-5). This transition from *Mirasi* to *Kalawant* may be articulated musically but it is not always accepted socially. In other words, although a *Mirasi* musician may stop performing *sarangi* and start performing *sitar*, the *Kalawant* community will not acknowledge his transition. This divide between *Mirasi*s and *Kalawant*s is rooted in distinct approaches to individual and collective identities: "soloists [*Kalawant*s] and accompanists [*Mirasi*s] *tend to see themselves* and are conceived by others as having fundamentally different social identities" (Neuman 1980: 92). In this sense, the segregated sociomusical identities of individual performers are shaped by larger hereditary organizations of related musicians: the collective social networks for *Mirasi*s are known as *biradari*s while the stylistically distinct lineages for *Kalawant*s are known as *gharana*s (Neuman 1977: 236; Neuman 1978: 211).

*Biradari*s are comprised of broad networks of patrilineally related *Mirasi* kin that initially congregated in urban centers and were named after the city of origin (Neuman 1980: 126). While nonhereditary *Mirasi*s can be included within these organizational structures, all of the men refer to one another as *bhai* or "brother" (*ibid*.). Marriages, however, usually stay within the hereditary

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[19] Although *Mirasi* and *Kalawant* function like castes, they are not often acknowledged as such. However, in line with Neuman (1978: 196 &2 17), I refer to these social groups as "castes" in order to emphasis their social functions.

[20] Refer to the second paragraph in **Sounding Performances: The Light Classical Genre of *Thumri***, where I discuss the history of *thumri* in relation to courtesans and public opinion.

associations of the *biradari* and only occasionally occur with outsiders (Neuman 1977: 237; Neuman 1980: 128). Furthermore, each *biradari* has a caste council known as the *panchayat* that is led by the *chaudhari* or head of the entire *biradari* (Neuman 1980: 127). This council of leading *Mirasi*s settles any disputes concerning marriage, divorce, or other problems between individuals in the *biradari* (Neuman 1977: 237; Neuman 1980 127-8). While the social identities of these broad networks are apparently well defined through cities of origin, marriage practices, and leadership councils, the musical identities of *biradari*s are evidently based solely upon classification within the *Mirasi* sociomusical caste.[21] For instance, consider a passage in which Neuman (1980: 126-7) implies that musical identity transforms a *biradari* into a *gharana*:

> The biradari as such is not named except as it is identified as originating in one or another place. If some members of the biradari develop a distinctive musical style and as a result become famous, or if they claim a distinctive style – whether or not it is so recognized – then the place name of the biradari will become the name of the gharana.

In this instance, "distinctive musical styles" serve as mechanisms through which *Mirasi*s in *biradari*s can transcend their degraded identities in the stratified system of sociomusical castes and emerge as *Kalawant*s in *gharana*s. Through this interpretation, I am suggesting that novel approaches to musical performances – whether through unprecedented formal structures or innovative renditions of *tan* passages – create distinct artistic identities that are situated in the

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[21] Among the three sources that discuss *Mirasi*s in *biradari*s – Neuman 1980, 1978, and 1977 – the only musical characteristics described are the historical associations with *sarangi*, *tabla*, and courtesan singers of *thumri*.

sociomusical nomenclature as *gharana*s. In short, *biradari*s must innovate – or at least claim to innovate – in order to become *gharana*s.

Organizing Performers: *Kalawant*s in *Gharana*s

A *gharana* is a hereditary or discipular lineage of North Indian musicians who share a collective musical style that distinguishes them from other *gharana*s (Neuman 1980: 146). In this definition, *gharana*s incorporate three sociomusical characteristics: (1) a central lineage of patrilineally related hereditary musicians that descend from a founding group of ancestors, (2) at least three generations of artistically distinguished offspring or nonhereditary disciples who follow the founders, and (3) a collective style or approach to musical performance that is unique enough to separate their lineage from every other *gharana* (*ibid*.). This tripartite definition of *gharana*s is widely accepted through summarization, elaboration, or anticipation by both Western ethnomusicologists (Farrell 2002: 32; Manuel 1989: 168; Sanyal &Widdess 2004: 95; Silver & Burghardt 1976: 46; Slawek 1991: 170; Wade 1984: 3-4) and Indian musicologists (Karnani 2005: 232-233; Deshpande 1973: 11-12). While each of the three components is critical in the process of *gharana* formation, "What binds all such groups is style – formulated, shared, and represented by the membership. Style… is the central reason for group being" (Neuman 1980: 146).

Although Neuman's definition for *gharana*s has provided an interpretive paradigm for nearly a quarter century of scholarship, the polyvocal context of North India in which *gharana*s are sociomusically defined suggests a multiplicity of understandings: "It is difficult, if not impossible to give an exact number or list of gharanas, since, as with Indian castes, they exist at

a number of different conceptual levels" (Neuman 1978: 188).[22] From these ambiguous sociomusical conceptualizations, two different types of *gharana*s have emerged: *gharana*s that are unquestionably accepted as authoritatively genuine and *gharana*s that struggle to claim authenticity. Authoritative members from the "genuine" *gharana*s and associated musical aficionados utilize three key objections to challenge the authenticity of struggling *gharanas* (*ibid*.: 191). For example, a community of musicians who identify as the Delhi *gharana* have been undermined through arguments that show (1) there are only two generations of descendents instead of the requisite three, (2) they have not created a distinct musical style, and (3) the founding members of the Delhi "*gharana*" were *sarangi* and *tabla* players and therefore *Mirasi*s (*ibid*.: 191-3). These arguments show that *gharana*s are not only defined by musical style and genealogical depth but also by instrumental specialties associated with sociomusical castes: as *sarangi* and *tabla* performers, *Mirasi*s – even if they claim otherwise – are categorically excluded from *gharana*s through the orthodox prerequisites established by the unquestionably authentic *gharana*s (*ibid*.: 191).

The Agra *gharana* is a quintessential example of an "authentic" *gharana* comprised of *Kalawant* vocalists who maintained a distinct musical style over the past six generations of hereditary and discipular performers (Wade 1984: 99 & 129). The musical style of this iconic *gharana* is often characterized as a cohesive *khyal* tradition that is distinguished by open-throated vocal projections, frequent rhythmic syncopations, exceptionally lengthy *alap* sections, articulately enunciated lyrics, and abundant *tan* techniques to approach *sam* (Neuman 1978: 188; Wade 1984: 129-31). While I was discussing these characteristic performance practices with an

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[22] My claim that North India is polyvocal emerges from Eck's (1981: 17-22) description of the "polytheistic imagination".

Agra vocalist in Calcutta, she suggested, "Only certain people in the Agra *gharana* [sing this way]… it's not for everybody". In this sense, when an informed audience member hears this distinct approach to *khyal* performance, he will easily identify the performer as a disciple of the Agra *gharana* (pers. comm. Sen 08/2011). This suggestion creates a link between the community of vocalists who comprise the Agra *gharana* and the distinct musical styles that they present during performances.

The Agra *gharana*'s sociomusical claim to stylistic originality is authenticated through a lineage of *khyal* singers that began in the early nineteenth century with a vocalist named Ghagghe Khuda Baksh (1790-1880) (Wade 1984: 82) and continues into the twenty-first century with Ustad Shaukat Hussain Khan (b. 1961). Furthermore, *Kalawant*s who identify with the Agra *gharana* describe hereditary and discipular connections to a renowned sixteenth century vocalist named Sujan Khan (*ibid*.: 81-83; pers. comm. Sen 08/2011): as a singer of *dhrupad*, a contemporary of Tansen (1520-1590), and a musician in Akbar's court (1542-1605), Sujan Khan validates the musical foundations of the Agra *gharana* through his prestigious status (Wade 1984: 81-3).[23] Not only does Sujan Khan's status authenticate the Agra style but his place in Akbar's court historicizes it by creating a connection to "the *ultimate authority* of the musical tradition stemming from the Mughal courts of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries" [my italics]

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[23] *Dhrupad* is the one of the oldest genres of North Indian classical music (Widdess 1994: 89); Mia Tansen (or Tan Sen) is the most important musician in the history of North Indian classical music (Neuman 1985: 101); Akbar the Great (1542-1605) was a Mughal emperor who was renowned for consolidating the musical talent in North India by patronizing numerous musicians (Powers 1980: 21-22; Owens 1987: 169; Wade 1979: 98).

(Capwell 1991: 95).[24] By claiming ownership of an original musical style and simultaneously situating that claim within an extensive lineage of hereditary musicians, the Agra *gharana* affirms and embodies the two tripartite definitions that were described by Neuman and outlined above.

Although this hereditary lineage extends into the sixteenth century, the Agra *gharana* as we know it today did not emerge until the nineteenth century vocalist, Ghagghe Khuda Baksh, left his home in Agra and began studying *khyal* with vocalists in the Gwalior *gharana* (Wade 1984: 81-4). When Baksh returned to Agra with his knowledge of *khyal*, he started teaching this novel genre to subsequent generations in his family (*ibid*.: 84). Evidently, Baksh's decision to teach his family *khyal* was not taken lightly by the Gwalior *gharana*: "They threatened him with death (by the sword) if he dared to take possession of what he had learned and call it the Agra style of music" (*ibid*.). In this instance, the Agra lineage was not considered a *gharana* until the genre of *khyal* was incorporated into their repertoire; however, since this burgeoning genre was the musical property of the Gwalior *gharana*, Agra vocalists were initially chastised and threatened for imitating. In this sense, the Agra *gharana* not only affirms Neuman's tripartite definitions but it also illustrates two additional characteristics commonly associated with *gharana*s: (1) *gharana*s focus on the genre of *khyal* and (2) musical borrowing – or more provocatively, musical stealing – is not taken lightly by *gharana* members.

Although Neuman's paradigmatic definition of a *gharana* excludes and marginalizes *Mirasi* performers who want to ascend the sociomusical ladder, his three distinctions seem to be applied and perpetuated by the cannon of universally accepted *gharana*s. Not only do the

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[24] See the first paragraph of Capwell (1991: 95) for an elaboration on the importance of history in establishing North Indian *gharana*s.

"authentic" *gharana* musicians embody and apply these distinctions but scholars also tend utilize the tripartite definition to frame their discussions. Authors have described the distinct musical styles and historically rooted lineages of the following *gharana*s: Allauddin Khan *gharana* (Manuel 1989), Delhi *gharana* (Wade 1984), Etawah *gharana* (Farrell 2002; Karnani 2005; Manuel 1989), Gwalior *gharana* (Wade 1984), Indore *gharana* (Karnani 2005; Manuel 1989; Silver & Burghardt 1976), Jaipur *gharana* (Wade 1984), Kirana *gharana* (Wade 1984), Patiala *gharana* (Wade 1984), Sahaswan/Rampur *gharana* (Wade 1984), Senia Maihar *gharana* (Dhar 1989; Farrell 2002; Manuel 1989; Slawek 1991), and Visnupur *gharana* (Capwell 1991). While there are a diversity of approaches employed to interpret the sociomusical significances of these variable *gharana*s, by in large, *gharana*s are described as communities of North Indian classical musicians who are connected through heredity or discipular genealogies and who share an artistic style that distinguishes them from other *gharanas*.

Dyadically Framing Sounds and Performers

At the turn of the nineteenth century, political power was transitioning away from the Mughal Empire and towards the British colonists. During the same period in which power was moving between these two political sources, sociomusical activity was in a dyadic state of ebb and flow. On one side of this musical stream lived the *Kalawant* vocalists who organized themselves into *gharana* lineages with distinct musical approaches to *khyal* performances (**Figure 2.6**). Within these performances they not only maintained the rigid structures of *raga* and *tala* but they also created a high classical genre that appealed to their courtly Mughal patrons. On the other side of the musical stream lived the *Mirasi* instrumentalists who played *sarangi* and *tabla* to accompany courtesan *thumri* renditions. These renditions of *thumri*

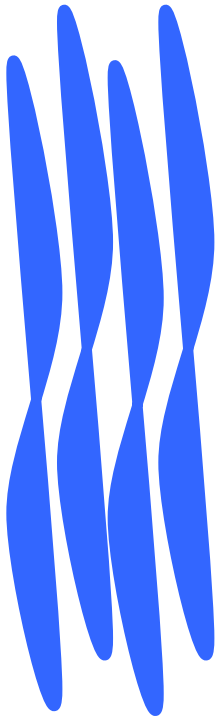

Figure 2.6: Distinguishing between two broad categories of sociomusical activities.

provided a sentimental and lyrical alternative to the aristocratic genre of *khyal* and conformed to the aesthetics of their courtesan patrons. While these two sides generally maintained the segregated identities that divided their musical styles and social organizations, there were some exceptions. *Mirasi* musicians in Delhi claimed *gharana* identity and individual *tabla* or *sarangi* performers who wanted to ascend their sociomusical caste set aside their drums and bows to start singing *khyal*. Although there are exceptions in any theoretical framework, I am not interested in rendering examples such as the Delhi *gharana* mute by calling them outliers; rather, I want to foster the ambiguity that is created through ambiguous musical activity in order to explore and perhaps understand sociomusical liminality.

3

Fieldworking between Liminal Sounds and Performers in Calcutta

The Benares Gharana Creates Stylistic Identity through Musical Hybridity

Confusing a Fieldworker

During my first week of fieldwork in Calcutta (July 4, 2011), I was on the phone with an Indian musicologist explaining to him that I wanted to conduct a project on the Benares *gharana*. He told me that it was not possible to conduct this project since the Benares *gharana* was not a real *gharana*: they only sang *thumri* and did not sing *khyal*. Yet my vocal teacher, Manasi Majumdar, who was in the other room eating lunch, had just spent the last hour teaching me a *khyal* composition in the Benares *gharana* style. Moreover, Manasidi explained to me that she had learned this *khyal* rendition from her *guru*, Girija Devi, who is one of the greatest exponents of the Benares *gharana*. These divergent interpretations were not only repeated throughout the entire seven weeks that I spent studying vocal music in Calcutta but they were also repeated in the literature of Indian Musicologists. Deshpande (1973: 9) states, "*thumri*-singing is devoid of the gharana divisions. Various *baj*s (styles) of *thurmi* such as the… Banarasi *baj* are not 'gharanas'. It is only in classical *khyal* music that we hear of gharanas." In response to the historical distinctions that segregated *thumri* and *khyal*, Karnani (2005: 5) argues, "It is high time that now we discuss Thumri in terms of Gharanas… Benaras Thumri is a separate Gharana because of predominant folk influence. Also Bol-Banao Thumri reached its full maturity in Benaras." When I was in India, I didn't know what to make of the contradictory taxonomies and interpretations that framed this so-called, "Benares *gharana*". But after returning to the United States with a collection of extracted raw materials and joining the assembly line of Western

ethnomusicologists who study *gharana*s, I have manufactured a finished product: by hybridizing a diversity of sociomusical processes, the Benares *gharana* has created a liminal stylistic identity.

Writing Identity: Brothel or *Gharana*?

When I was interviewing Amlan Dasgupta, an articulate connoisseur of North Indian classical music, Professor of English, and director of the Archive of North Indian Classical Music, he suggested, "Benares is not a *khyal gharana* in the same sense as Agra is a *khyal gharana*… Benares *khyal* singing is very much a kind of additional qualification that most of the *thumri* singers had." From a similar vantage point, Adesh Chatterjee, an orthodox *Kalawant* musician who staunchly opposed inauthentic *gharana*s, argued:

> The Benares *gharana* style is just like prostitution, you're sleeping with so many men you're not loving *one particular* person… so they are taking good thing from you good thing from me and they are then teaching their descendants or sons all these good things and making a new style!" (August 5, 2011)

To substantiate these arguments, Adeshda went into his library and retrieved a publication from an Indian musicologist that showed there were *sarangi* and *tabla* performers – or courtesan accompanists – in the Benares lineage. These periodic interviews with musicians and aficionados who questioned the legitimacy of the Benares *gharana* were situated within my weekly schedule of vocal lessons among a cohort of teachers that identified as the Benares *gharana*. A self-promoting brochure that was designed by two of my Benares *gharana* vocal teachers, Deepak

Mishra and Prakash Mishra, evidently fulfilled the requisites outlined in Neuman's (1980: 146) tripartite *gharana* definition. In this sense, both proponents and opponents of the Benares musical style called upon the written word to legitimate or illegitimate the stylistic identity of this hereditary lineage. Presented as evidence, these written documents illustrate the basic arguments for and against Benares *gharana* identity. Interpreted as compatible, the texts complement one another to suggest the liminal identity of the Benares *gharana*.

The publication that Adeshda called upon (Dasasarma 1993) included nine separate lineages for the Benares *gharana* musicians.[1] The multiplicity of lineages situated within the Benares *gharana* shows that the genealogical structure of this community resembled the broad social network of a *biradari* rather than the relatively insular and vertical *gharana*: "The central structural feature of a gharana is a "core" lineage [or *khandan*] founded by an individual or sometimes two brothers" (Neuman 1980: 148).[2] Given the structure of Neuman's sentence, it seems as though he is suggesting that a *khandan* is *the* critical component in a *gharana*. Contrarily, the nine separate lineages of the Benares *gharana* suggest that it is comprised of a multiplicity of distinct *khandan*s rather than the normative singular *khandan*. Moreover, the implication that the Benares *gharana* is hereditarily multiple echoes a feature of the *biradari* network: these *biradari* "brotherhoods are composed of a number of lineages that share an identity based on common territorial origin" (Neuman 1978: 203). In this sense, the numerous lineages incorporated within the genealogy of the Benares *gharana* suggests that this

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[1] See **Appendix A**

[2] See Neuman (1980: 96-100) for a case study that describes the *khandan* of Ustad Wahid Hussein Khan and discusses the importance of the *khandan* in the sociomusical identity of a *gharana*.

brotherhood of musicians should instead be entitled, the Benares *biradari*. Calling the Benares lineage a *biradari* imperatively situates the musicians within this genealogy in the *Mirasi* sociomusical caste of *tabla* and *sarangi* performers who accompany courtesan *thumri* singers – or "prostitutes". In this instance, Adeshda's evocation of the text and the genealogical implications uncovered through its interpretation, inform the claim: "the Benares *gharana* style is just like prostitution".

The process of deconstructing the Benares *gharana* by situating its lineage within the *Mirasi* caste is expedited by the musical specialties ascribed to Benares musicians: voice, *tabla*, *sarangi*, *sitar*, *veena*, and *pakhawaj*.[3] Although voice, *sitar*, and *veena* are musical specialties of the *Kalawant* caste, *tabla*, *sarangi*, and *pakhawaj* belong in the hands of *Mirasi*s. The genealogies depicted in the text evoked by Adeshda indicated that there were more Benares musicians associated with *Mirasi* specialties than *Kalawant* specialties (**Figure 3.1** & **Figure 3.2**). Furthermore, these genealogies did not distinguish between *khyal* vocalists and *thumri* vocalists; if these distinctions were included, perhaps all of the vocalists would have been described as exponents of the *Mirasi* associated *thumri* genre. By presenting the Benares *gharana* as a genealogy of multiplicity rather than a genealogy of singularity and by identifying the musicians within this genealogy as *Mirasi* specialists, the text evoked by Adeshda transformed the Benares *gharana* into the Benares *biradari*.

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[3] *Veena* (also spelled *vina*, *bina*, or *bin*) is "The North Indian stick zither. It is considered the most ancient and revered of musical instruments in India" (Neuman 1980: 271). *Pakhawaj* is a barrel drum that traditionally accompanied courtesan *Kathak* dancers in North India (Chakravorty 2008: 147).

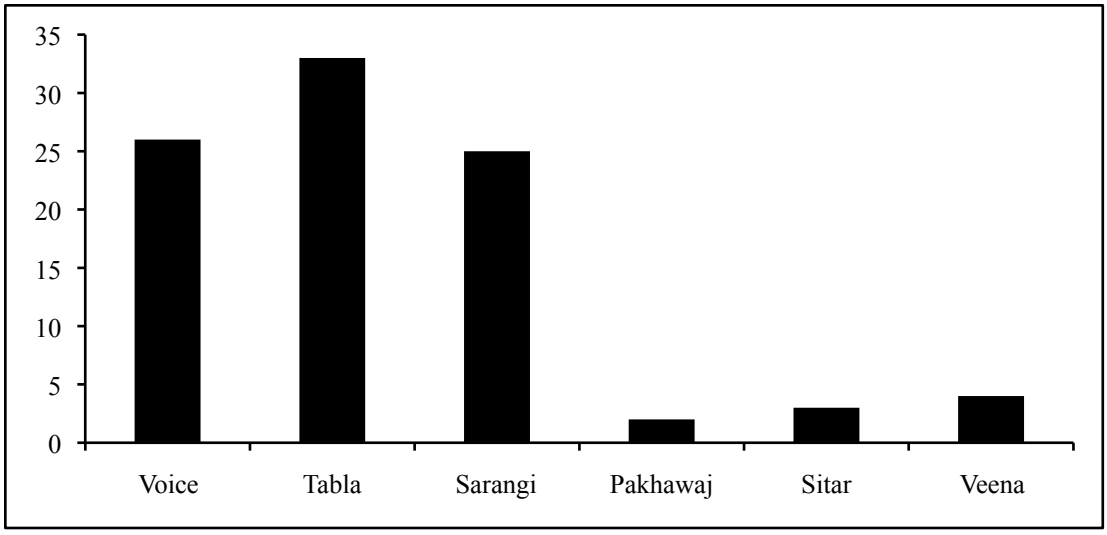

Figure 3.1: The y-axis refers to the number of musicians from the Benares *gharana* lineages that play the instrument listed on the x-axis.

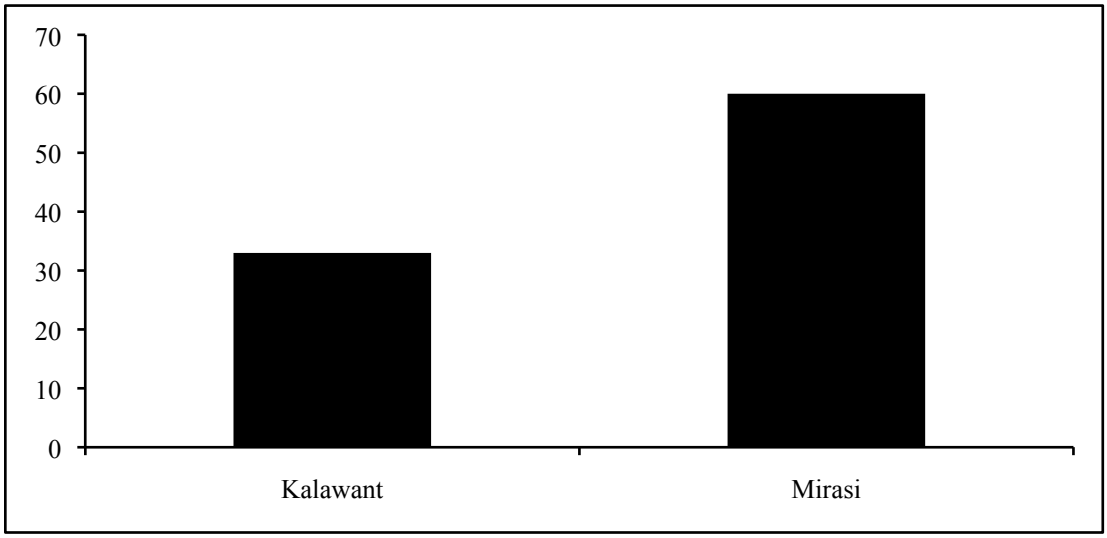

Figure 3.2: Identical to **Figure 3.1** except that the musical specialties are grouped into *Kalawant* specialties (voice, *sitar* & *veena*) and *Mirasi* specialties (*sarangi*, *tabla* & *pakhawaj*).

On the other hand, a self-promoting brochure written by two of my Benares *gharana* vocal teachers, Deepakji and Prakashiji, challenged the claims from the text evoked by Adeshda. Through their self-definitions, Deepakji and Prakashji sequentially fulfilled the tripartite definition of *gharana* identity that I previous summarized as: (1) a central lineage of patrilineally related hereditary musicians that descend from a founding group of ancestors, (2) at least three generations of artistically distinguished offspring or nonhereditary disciples who follow the founders, and (3) a collective style or approach to musical performance that is unique enough to separate their lineage from every other *gharana*.[4] The self-defining autobiography through which Deepakji and Prakashji claim *gharana* identity, reads (Mishra 2011):

> The young vocalist duo **Prakash & Deepak Mishra** (Swar Sadhak Bandhu) is now set to emerge as the shining star in the Hindustani Vocal Classical Music arena and has already developed into performer of immense maturity and is considered to be one of the torch-bearers of the new generation of singers in the world of Hindustani Classical Music.
>
> Having graduated from Calcutta University in commerce stream they have acquired master degree in music from Prachin Kala Kendra, Chandigarh.
>
> The bounteous blessings of **Maa Saraswati** (Goddess of Music) is reflected in abundance in their **Khayal**, **Bhajan**, **Tappa**, **Tarana**, and different other Classical forms.

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[4] See Chapter 2 **Organizing Performers: *Kalawant*s in *Gharana*s**

They have learned the art of Khayal Gayaki under the keen and auspicious tuteleage of their grandfather **Lt. Gayanacharya**, **Pt. Damodar Mishra** and father & Guru **Pt. Mohan Lal Mishra**.

They are also receives the shower of blessings to cultivate their music from their uncles **Pt. Rajan Ji**, **Sajan Ji**, & **Pt. Sohan Lal Mishra**.

Bestowed with melodious, natural, resonant, mellifluous and effortless range of voice their main features of singing are steadiness in rendition and precision of Swaras.

The essential characteristics of their approach include the Raga elaboration with step by step progression followed by Upaj (Improvisation) and complex Tans.

When the young vocalist duo performs music transcends into a holistic experience, creating a relationship like an invisible thread between the performer and audiences.

Swar Sadha Bandhu has given many performances in various prestigious music conferences in India.

They are also regular performers on All India Radio, Doordarsan and different private channels.

> With the heritage of 200 years old Banaras Gharana, their dedication, hard work (Riyaz) and excellent performing capability, made them successfull vocal duet with their excellent performance, they have added value to their Banaras Gharana constantly.

In the first sentence of this promotional autobiography, Deepakji and Prakashji define themselves as the "torch-bearers of the new generation of singers in the world of Hindustani Classical Music." This process of self-definition evokes two interpretations that can be understood by further subdividing the quotation: (1) as the "torch-bearers of the new generation" Deepakji and Prakashji are carrying on the tradition of the hereditary lineage in which they are situated and (2) as "singers in the world of Hindustani Classical Music" these two vocalists are distinguishing themselves from the *Mirasi* castes of *tabla* and *sarangi* performers. Through these two conduits of self-definition, a hereditary lineage of vocalists is born.

This hereditary lineage is situated within three generations of artistically distinguished offspring who descend from a group of patrilineally related founding fathers:

> They [generation 3] have learned the art of Khayal Gayaki under the keen and auspicious tuteleage of their *grandfather* [generation 1] **Lt. Gayanacharya**, **Pt. Damodar Mishra** and *father* [generation 2] & Guru **Pt. Mohan Lal Mishra**. They are also receives the shower of blessings to cultivate their music from their *uncles* [artistically distinguished offspring] **Pt. Rajan Ji**, **Sajan Ji**, & **Pt. Sohan Lal Mishra** [my italics].

In the first sentence of this quote, Deepakji and Prakashji are positioned in the third generation of performing artists and preceded by their father in the second generation and grandfathers in

the first generation. In the second sentence, Deepakji and Prakashji substantiate and embellish their claim to *gharana* identity by evoking artistically distinguished offspring, their uncles. In this instance, Deepakji and Prakashji fulfill two of Neuman's three *gharana* requisites: after creating a hereditary lineage in the first sentence of their autobiography, the fourth and fifth sentences create a patrilineal genealogy that emerges from two founding grandfathers and extends through three generations of distinguished vocalists.

With an ancestrally authenticated hereditary foundation, the self-defining autobiography moves on to claim an essential stylistic identity:

> Bestowed with melodious, natural, resonant, mellifluous and effortless range of voice their main features of singing are steadiness in rendition and precision of Swaras. The essential characteristics of their approach include the Raga elaboration with step by step progression followed by Upaj (Improvisation) and complex Tans.

Although this proclamation of stylistic identity was written for popular promotion, we should not ignore the fact that these "essential characteristics" do not lay claim to any distinct musical features. For example, the list of adjectives describing their "range of voice" does not correlate to any unique musical sounds – what music styles in North India are not "resonant"? Similarly, their "precision of Swaras" does not indicate anything other than their ability to sing in tune.[5] The sequential approach of "Raga elaboration" proceeding into "Upaj (Improvisation) and complex Tans" is nothing more than a pedestrian description of the *khyal* genre. Although these "distinct" musical characteristics may seem vague, consider the way in which Purnima Sen (b.

[5] *Swara*s refer to the pitches in a *raga*.

1937), a renowned exponent of the unquestionably authentic Agra *gharana*, describes the stylistic identity of her *gharana* (Sen 2012): "The distinctive features of the style are the melodic fluidity and complexity of the compositions associated to simple and sober poems. The compositions sung here are signed by Muslim artists with a devotion to Krishna." This opaque stylistic description of the Agra *gharana* is echoed in both the Western ethnomusicological literature and the Indian musicological literature: "Agra musicians lay emphasis on clear enunciation of text. They were also fond of using rhythmic and melodic variations. Agra musicians had liking for bold and masculine voice" (Karnani 2005: 101). Or, from Wade's (1984: 131) capstone summary of the Agra *gharana* style: the Agra *gharana* has "a propensity for composition, strong vocal production, and a balanced sense of proportion in structuring performances, with cultivation of rhythmic elements". From these descriptions we can glean musical characteristics that resemble general qualities of musicianship rather distinct audible styles. For example, Karnani and Wade agree that one of the key characteristics in the Agra *gharana* style is the use of "rhythmic… variations" or the "cultivation of rhythmic elements". But does this characteristic actually tell us anything about the *distinct* style of the Agra *gharana*? How does the use of rhythmic variation or the cultivation of rhythmic elements make a style of music original? Is it not the case that most, if not all, styles of music vary rhythmically and incorporate rhythmic elements? Although I know – by taking vocal lessons with Purnima Sen – that the Agra *gharana* has one of the most identifiable musical styles, what I am trying to show is that this unquestionably authentic style is invariably described through a vague set of imprecisely defined musical characteristics. Thus, returning to the self-defining autobiography written by Deepakji and Prakashji, not only do they claim a set of essential characteristics but this stylistic claim is written in the same opaque and infinitely interpretable language that is

employed by the pantheon of "unquestionable" *gharana*s. Let me emphasize this point by restating their proclamation of an essential musical identity:

> Bestowed with melodious, natural, resonant, mellifluous and effortless range of voice their main features of singing are steadiness in rendition and precision of Swaras. The essential characteristics of their approach include the Raga elaboration with step by step progression followed by Upaj (Improvisation) and complex Tans.

Having claimed a distinctive musical style and having described a hereditary lineage of musicians that extended three generations, Deepakji and Prakashji expose their identity in the concluding sentence of the autobiography and become a *gharana*:

> With the heritage of 200 years old Banaras Gharana, their dedication, hard work (Riyaz) and excellent performing capability, made them successfull vocal duet with their excellent performance, they have added value to their Banaras Gharana constantly.

Although these two vocalists sequentially fulfilled the *gharana* requirements listed by Neuman, they did not directly address Adeshda's genealogical critique, a critique which was also leveled against the Delhi *gharana*: the founding members of the Delhi *gharana* were sarangi and *tabla* performers and therefore *Mirasi*s; *Mirasi*s – even if they claim otherwise – are categorically excluded from *gharana*s.[6] This is the foundation upon which Adeshda makes his polemic claim against the Benares *gharana*:

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[6] See Chapter 2 **Organizing Performers: *Kalawant*s in *Gharana*s**

> The Benares *gharana* style is just like prostitution, you're sleeping with so many men you're not loving *one particular* person… so they are taking good thing from you good thing from me and they are then teaching their descendants or sons all these good things and making a new style!

But listen to Adeshda closely, he focuses on the illegitimacy of the *style* presented by the Benares *gharana*; however, rather then actually rendering their style illegitimate by relegating Benares musicians to mere imitation and replication, he shows that their musical process of prostitution – or, in my pedantry, "hybridization" – actually creates something distinct: "a new style!" If we take two of Neuman's claims seriously – (1) "Style… is the central reason for group [*gharana*] being" (1980: 146) and (2) "If some members of the biradari develop a distinctive musical style and as a result become famous, or if they claim a distinctive style – whether or not it is so recognized – then the place name of the biradari will become the name of the gharana" (*ibid*.: 126-7) – then we can suggest that some of the musicians in the Benares *biradari* developed a new style of hybridization and in so doing transformed themselves into a *gharana*.

In the following sections, I interpret the musical sounds and performances that I documented in Calcutta through an experimental integration of the self-defining autobiography written by Deepakji & Prakashji and the new style of musical prostitution suggested by Adeshda. In other words, I substantiate the claim of *gharana* identity presented in the promotional autobiography by describing the musical style of the Benares *gharana* as uniquely hybrid among a cannon of *gharana*s that create stylistic identity through musical singularity. In this sense, although Adeshda derides Benares musicians for a prostituted musical style, I actually take this depraved stylistic identity, rename it "hybridity", and substitute it for the "essential

characteristics" listed by Deepakji and Prakashji: "mellifluous and effortless range of voice", "precision of Swaras", "Raga elaboration", or "Upaj (Improvisation) and complex Tans." Thus, my manufactured finished product, reworked from the first section of this chapter, reads: if style is the central component in *gharana* formation then the unprecedented stylistic liminality presented by Benares musicians should create *gharana* identity.

Hearing Identity: Imitating the Sounds and Gestures of *Sarangi* and *Shehnai*

Imitating the sounds and gestures of instrumentalists is one of the modalities through which Benares *gharana* vocalists performatively create a syncretic musical identity. For example, while attending a concert on the outskirts of Calcutta (August 7, 2011), I saw Deepakji imitating a double-reed aerophone known as the *shehnai* and a bowed string instrument known as the *sarangi*.[7] In this instance, Deepakji performed the hybridized musical identity of the Benares *gharana* by extracting fragmented musical sounds from instrumental performances and situating these fragments within his *khyal* renditions. Outlining the interviews that led up to Deepakji's concert and discussing important passages from his performance will show that Benares *gharana* vocalists create hybridized musical identities by juxtaposing fragmented imitations of *shehnai* and *sarangi*. Moreover, this process of hybridization is a gesture towards distinct stylistic identity and not a statement of defiance that subverts the elevated status of *Kalawant*s in *gharana*s.

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[7] The *shehnai* is a double-reed aerophone that is often described as an oboe and is commonly performed during weddings, festivals, temple ceremonies, and folk dances; see Jairazbhoy (1970; 1980) and Deva (1975).

I first heard about vocal imitations of instrumental techniques when I was interviewing a professional *sarod* performer and aficionado of North Indian classical music, Anindya Banerjee (b. 1958).[8] He suggested that Benares *gharana* vocalists imitate melodic phrases that are characteristic of *sarangi* performances since they had learned how to sing from professional *sarangi* players: "You'll find – because they [Benares *gharana* vocalists] have learned from… sarangi players – some *sarangi tan*s." After making this statement, Anindyada demonstrated a *sarangi tan* by singing a series of ascending pitches that alternated between longer and shorter durations. Anindyada also mentioned that Benares *gharana* vocalists imitate the *shehnai*:

> Instead of *akar* [he sings an example on the 'a' vowel] Benares vocalists do *ekar* [he sings an example on the 'e' vowel]. Like that you'll find in Rajan and Sajan Mishra and all of them [he sings an example on 'a' and then switches to 'e'].[9] 'E' vowel instead of 'a' vowel: instead of *akar* they use *ekar*… that is one characteristic in the Benares *gharana*.

The *ekar* and *akar* phrases that Anindyada was discussing referred to melodic phrases that are situated somewhere in between Wade's (1984: 28) rapid improvisatory "plateau *tan*s" and

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[8] *Sarod* is a fretless string instrument that is played with a plectrum.

[9] Rajan and Sajan Mishra are two renowned vocalists from the Benares *gharana* that the autobiography written by Deepakji and Prakashji referred to as "Pt. Rajan Ji and Pt. Sajan Ji".

Manuel's (1989: 122) sentimental *pukar* passages.[10] In this sense, *ekar* and *akar* phrases are rapidly ascending lines that level out on climatic pitches that are periodically revisited; the only audible difference between *ekar* and *akar* is that *ekar* is sung with the 'e' vowel and *akar* is sung with the 'a' vowel. Anindyada elaborated on his demonstrations of *ekar* and *akar* by explaining that Benares *gharana* vocalists "sing this *ekar* style because in *shehnai* they do *ekar* [sings example with 'e' vowel], so also *shehnai* element is found in Benares." In other words, Anindyada was suggesting that Benares *gharana* vocalists sing *ekar* with an 'e' vowel instead of *akar* with an 'a' vowel as a means of imitating the reedy timbre (i.e. "*shehnai* element") created by *shehnai* performers. This interpretation evokes Deshpande's (1973: 9) description of vocal characteristics in *gharana*s as "purely physiological phenomenon": the use of an 'e' vowel tightens and restricts the vocalists trachea to produce a sound that Anindyada called the "*shehnai* element".

Although Anindyada was a professional musician and a close friend of many vocalists in the Benares *gharana*, it was important to verify that hereditary members in the Benares *gharana* shared Anindyada's perspectives on instrumental imitations: two days after interviewing Anindyada, I went to Deepakji's house on the outskirts of Calcutta to take voice lessons, conduct an interview, and watch his concert. As a hereditary musician in the Benares *gharana*, Deepakji was a knowledgeable informant who had extensive experience with the musical styles of his familial *gharana*. While interviewing Deepakji, I asked him about the ways in which Benares *gharana* vocalists emulated the *shehnai* and *sarangi*. He described the same musical

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[10] See Chapter 2 **Sounding Performances: The Light Classical Genre of *Thumri*** and **Sounding Performances: The High Classical Genre of *Khyal*** for further descriptions of "plateau *tan*s" and *pukar* passages.

characteristics that Anindyada had discussed: *tan*s from *sarangi* and *ekar* from *shehnai*. He also offered the same explanations: Benares *gharana* vocalists sing *sarangi tan*s because they were taught to sing by *sarangi* performers and they sing *ekar* because they are trying to emulate the *shehnai* timbre. In addition, Deepakji mentioned that Benares *gharana* vocalists perform *shehnai tan*s, which he proceeded to demonstrate by embellishing a single pitch with multiple *murki* ornamentations. In total, Deepakji and Anindyada had collectively described and demonstrated three separate ways in which Benares *gharana* vocalists imitate instrumental sounds: *sarangi tan*s, *shehnai tan*s, and *ekar*.

After completing my interview with Deepakji, I went to the stage on the ground floor of his house and waited with his other students for the performance to begin. When Deepakji started singing, I heard him imitate the three types of instrumental sounds that he and Anindyada had described during our interviews. In **Figure 3.3**, I transcribed one of the many *sarangi tan*s that Deepakji sang during his performance.[11] The imitative *sarangi tan* in **Figure 3.3** is only an

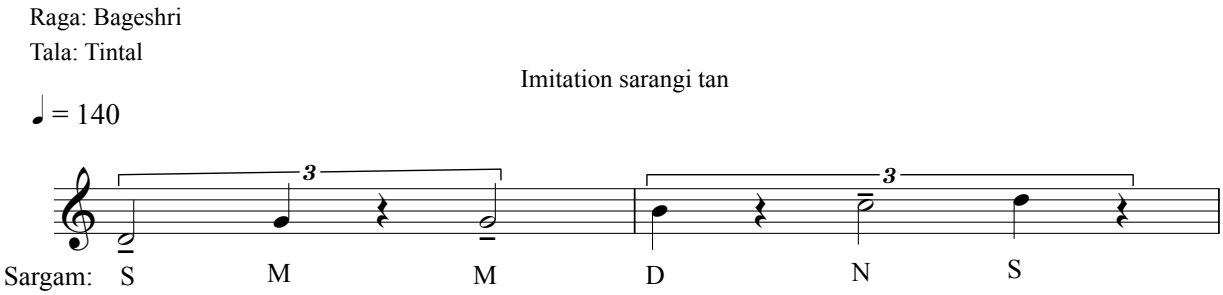

Figure 3.3: Deepakji's vocal imitation of a *sarangi tan*.

[11] Deepakji sang this passage in *rag* Bageshri; for a transcription of *rag* Bageshri see Chapter 2 **Figure 2.1**.

introductory segment of a much longer and more complex vocal *tan*. However, aside from these eight beats of introductory material, the rest of the musical sounds in this *tan* are rendered in a style that does not imitate *sarangi* techniques. What, then, are the musical characteristics that make these eight beats a *sarangi tan*? When the concert was over I asked Deepakji this same question and instead of answering with a verbal description, he proceeded to offer another demonstration. After considering the *sarangi tan*s that Deepakji demonstrated during our interviews and listening to a variety of vocalists in the Benares *gharana*, it seems as though a vocal *tan* becomes an imitative *sarangi tan* when it is comprised of a series of ascending pitches that alternate between longer and shorter durations. The rests, syncopations, and specific note values that Deepakji used during his performance are probably context specific characteristics rather than defining qualities of *sarangi tan*s. Moreover, whether or not there is something essentially *sarangi* about a series of ascending pitches that alternate between longer and shorter durations is less important then the fact that both Deepakji and Anindyada named these ascending pitches *sarangi tan*s.

In this sense, I am suggesting that there is an abstract set of musical characteristics that a group of musicians known as the Benares *gharana* have decided to call the vocal imitation of *sarangi tan*s. Rather than evenly distributing and mixing these abstracted sounds within a vocal performance, Benares *gharana* vocalists isolate these fragments of *sarangi* sounds and situate them in the midst of a *khyal* rendition. This performance process is an exercise in artistic juxtaposition. In other words, the hybridized artistic identity of the Benares *gharana* is created not through the process of blending styles into a homogenous mixture but rather through the juxtaposition of fragmented musical sounds held together as a musical mosaic.

While this "mosaic model" tells us something about the ways in which musical hybridity is performed, what does the integration of *sarangi* techniques tells us about the sociomusical identity of the Benares *gharana*? The adamant proclamation of both *gharana* identity and *sarangi* imitation suggests that the Benares musicians are locating their collective identity – both socially and musically – in between the dyadic framework of sociomusical activities at the beginning of the nineteenth century.[12] If the *sarangi* is inextricably linked to the *Mirasi* sociomusical caste, the *biradari* social networks, the light classical genre of *thumri*, and a history of courtesan accompaniment then the decision to evoke this instrument during a high classical *khyal* performance – historically associated with Mughal emperors, *Kalawant*s soloists, and vertical *gharana* lineages – is a decision to exist betwixt and between.

During this liminal *khyal* performance, Deepakji also sang imitative renditions of *shehnai tan*s in which he embellished a single pitch with multiple *murki* ornamentations. I was able to aurally identify Deepakji's imitative *shehnai tan*s since these vocal passages were near-perfect replicas of the demonstrations that he sang in the interview a few hours earlier. These audible symbols for *shehnai* were supported and reaffirmed through visually analogous hand gestures that conveyed the opening and closing of *shehnai* tone holes. In other words, every time Deepakji started to sing a *shehnai tan* – by repeatedly ornamenting a single pitch – he also raised his right hand to shoulder level and began bending and flexing his fingers as though he were playing a *shehnai*. **Figure 3.4** offers an illustration of these imitative hand gestures: Deepakji is sitting in the center of the stage and wearing a salmon *kurta* while emulating the *shehnai* through vocal *tan*s and right hand gestures. Towards the end of this symbolic imitation, Deepakji diffused

[12] See Chapter 2 **Figure 2.6**

Figure 3.4: Deepkaji's right hand imitates the opening and closing of the tone holes on a *shehnai*.

the *shehnai* metaphor by exploring a greater diversity of pitch materials through fast scalar runs; in addition, he substituted the multiple *murki* ornamentations around a single pitch with the characteristically vocal performance of *gamak tan*s in multiple octaves. In this sense, Deepakji allowed the audible symbols of *shehnai* impersonation to fadeout while he returned to a stylistically vocal projection. At the same time that the audible symbols for *shehnai* began to dissipate, Deepakji dropped his right hand from shoulder level and began displaying the expansive hand gestures that are normally presented in vocal performances.

Figure 3.5 provides a graphical representation of a typical *shehnai tan* from Deepakji's performance: in this hypothetical sonogram, the x-axis represents the passage of time while the y-axis indicates the frequency of the pitch that Deepakji was singing. On the left side of the dotted vertical line, the relatively stable pitch frequencies depict the characteristics of a *shehnai*

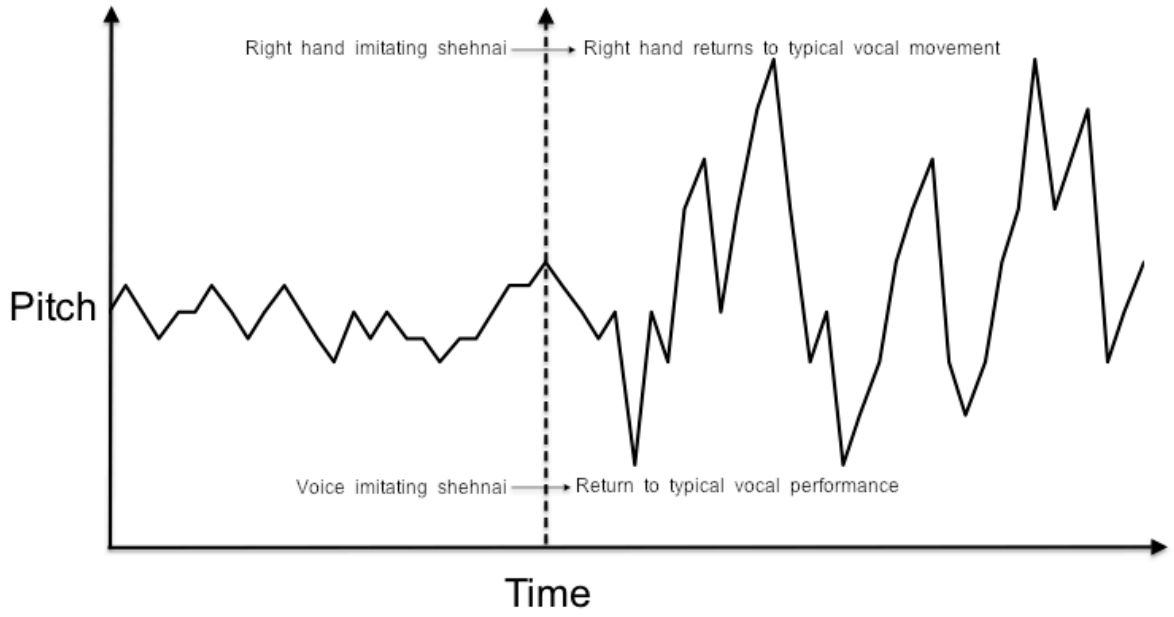

Figure 3.5: A hypothetical diagram that depicts the vocal imitation of a *shehnai tan*.

tan in which a single note is repeatedly ornamented. The right side of the dotted line shows the abrupt departure from *shehnai* imitation and the return to expansive scalar runs. In this instance, I argue that the repetitive *murki* ornamentations depicted on the left side of the sonogram define the vocalist's imitation of *shehnai tan*s. These characteristically *shehnai* sounds are extracted from instrumental performances and repositioned among a series of other musical fragments that are presented during *khyal* renditions sung by Benares *gharana* vocalists. Similar to the musical analysis of *sarangi tan*s, this interpretation depicts the hybrid identity of the Benares *gharana* as a process of juxtaposing musical sounds rather than an even blend of borrowed musics.

The *ekar* passages that imitate the reedy timbre of the *shehnai* offer a third example of the juxtaposed hybridity employed during Deepakji's *khyal* performance. In this instrumental

imitation, climatic *akar* phrases sung on an ‘a’ vowel are replaced with *ekar* phrases sung on an ‘e’ vowel (**Figure 3.6**). Deepakji’s attempt to emulate the *shehnai* by singing ‘e’ instead of ‘a’ was reflected during our interviews in which he repeatedly mentioned the sharp and penetrating sound of the *shehnai* while he was demonstrating *ekar* phrases. Similarly, in my interview with Anindyada, he suggested that Benares *gharana* vocalists “sing this *ekar* style because in *shehnai*

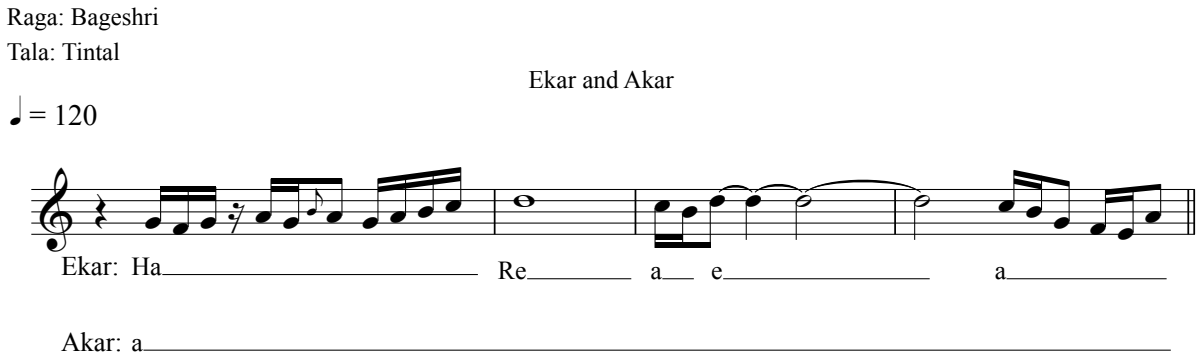

Figure. 3.6: In *ekar* the vocalist sings with the ‘e’ vowel and in *akar* the vocalists sings ‘a’.

they do *ekar* [sings example with ‘e’ vowel], so also *shehnai* element is found in Benares.” In this instance, I echo Deshpande’s (1973: 9) analysis of voice as a “purely physiological phenomenon”: I interpret Deepakji’s “sharp and penetrating sound” as Anindyada’s “*shehnai* element” and argue that *ekar* phrases convey the pointillistic timbre of *shehnai* through a closed-throated ‘e’ vowel as opposed to an open-throated ‘a’ vowel. Similar to *sarangi tan*s and *shehnai tan*s, these *ekar* phrases represent musical elements extracted from an original instrumental context and repositioned within a vocal *khyal* rendition. This act of syncretic repositioning does not imply a process of homogenous blending but rather, these fragmented *ekar* phrases maintain the timbral identity of *shehnai* performances such that informed listeners can hear the musical

sounds that metaphorically perform *shehnai*. This style of juxtaposed rather than blended hybridity describes a core component in the stylistic identity of the Benares *gharana*.

Although the analysis of *shehnai tan*s and *ekar* passages replicates my interpretation of *sarangi tan*s, the sociomusical implications that emerge from *shehnai* imitation refine our understanding of the liminality embodied in the Benares *gharana*. Among the limited publications that discuss the *shehnai*, Jairazbhoy (1970: 377) states that this instrument was "played at the gateways of palaces and mausoleums at fixed hours of the day. It could also herald the arrival and departure of visiting dignitaries, and it is probable that the *naubat* tradition [the orchestra in which *shehnai* was typically performed] was introduced to India before the Mogul period." Furthermore, he mentions, "Throughout Northern India the *shahna'i* is also used in various folk dances, marriage ceremonies and processions." How do these performance contexts inform our understanding of the practices of *shehnai* imitation in the Benares *gharana*?

Jairazbhoy describes two diverging environments in which the *shehnai* is performed: the aristocratic context where it heralds the movements of dignitaries and the common context where it accompanies folk dances. In one sense, these contrasting *shehnai* stages show that this instrument developed in a history of sociomusical hybridity and therefore presented itself as an obvious source of imitation for the hybridizing aesthetics of the Benares *gharana*. In a similar sense, these divergent performance contexts describe an instrument that does not belong in the hands of *Kalawant gharana*s nor in the hands of *Mirasi biradari*s; thus, the decision to imitate the *shehnai* is a purely musical decision without sociopolitical implications. In other words, the vocal imitation of *sarangi* by a group of musicians claiming *gharana* identity suggests a defiant integration of caste aesthetics that is meant to actively subvert existing sociomusical segregations between *Mirasi*s and *Kalawant*s; however, since the practice of musical hybridity incorporated

an instrument as neutral as *shehnai*, I claim that the Benares *gharana* employed hybridity as a musical process to create a distinct stylistic identity and not as a musical statement to revolutionize the stratified status quo. In this sense, the gesture to exist betwixt and between the two streams of sociomusical activity in the early nineteenth century was a gesture to create a unique stylistic identity without controversy.

Hearing Identity: Borrowing Amir Khan's *Khyal* in *Rag* Hamsadhvani

Reinterpreting compositions from musicians in separate *gharana*s is another modality through which Benares *gharana* vocalists enact the process of musical hybridity. An important example of this hybridized procedure is illustrated through a *khyal* composition that two Benares *gharana* vocalists, Rajan Mishra (b. 1951) and Sajan Mishra (b. 1956), borrowed from the legendary vocalist, Amir Khan (1912-1973).[13] While working collectively through transcriptions and analyses, Anindyada and I determined that Rajanji and Sajanji transposed the *raga* and replaced the lyrics from Amir Khan's original version while maintaining the original *tala* and *khyal* structure. By extracting musical fragments from Amir Khan's composition and recontextualizing these sounds within a modified version, Rajanji and Sajanji enacted musical syncretism through the same hybridizing juxtapositions that explained Deepakji's imitation of *shehnai* and *sarangi*. Moreover, by focusing on both *raga* modifications and lyrical substitutions, Rajanji and Sajanji hybridized performance practices from *thumri* and *khyal*. While this liminal gesture situates these two vocalists between *thumri* and *khyal*, it also illustrates a tactical strategy to avoid controversial responses to their syncretic style: as a vocalist with an obscured position in the sociomusical framework, Amir Khan is an ideal candidate to borrow from.

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[13] Rajan and Sajan Mishra are Deepakji and Prakashji's paternal relatives.

The act of borrowing compositions and imitating vocalists from other *gharana*s was questioned and critiqued by many of the musicians that I spoke with in Calcutta. For example, Purnima Sen from the Agra *gharana* expressed her concerns about sharing vocal compositions:

> My *guruji*s would spend months and months just teaching me *one* song 'cause they couldn't stand the thought that I wouldn't learn it right or that I would forget it and sing it the wrong way, you know. And if it was one of these old, old *bandishes*, you know, one of the ones from the beginning of our *gharana* with Sujan Khan or one of his nephews, then they wouldn't even let me perform it in public. 'Cause of course they were always worried that someone would listen in and pick it up at the concert and would go home and practice and try to sing it at their own concert. And of course they would do it all wrong 'cause they didn't have the right *talim*. Just not too long ago at all, these Agra people would really guard their *bandishes* and only shared them with students. But you know now things are changing: people are sharing the old *bandishes*; people are taking *talim* from all kinds of *guru*s. But I still keep my *bandishes* safe. It's like my *guruji*s wanted me to keep these *bandishes* only for my students and just for my respect to them I am only teaching them for my students.[14] (July 28, 2011)

This quote illustrates some of the concerns that North Indian classical vocalists experience when facing the possibility that someone may imitate their songs. However, Rajanji and Sajanji might have felt more comfortable reinterpreting and hybridizing Amir Khan's composition since the

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[14] *Talim* refers to musical training or musical lessons, *bandishes* refers to the compositions, and *guruji* is a respectful title for a music teacher.

uncertainty surrounding Amir Khan's sociomusical identity could have destabilized his authority and prestige. As one of the greatest vocalists from the 20th century (Wade 1984: 266), Amir Khan is an obvious candidate for musical inspiration and emulation.

While Amir Khan's artistic talent is unquestioned, his position in the sociomusical framework of distinct hereditary *gharana*s is unclear (*ibid*.). Although Amir Khan's father, Shamir Khan, was a performer from the Dhanadhtha *gharana*, Shahmir Khan worked as a court musician in the city of Indore among Indore *gharana* musicians (Wade 1984: 266). Since children hereditarily inherit their *gharana*, we would assume that Amir Khan was a member of the Dhanadhtha *gharana*. However, Deshpande (1973: 66) completely contradicts Wade's claim that Shahmir Khan was a member of the Dhanadhtha *gharana* by stating, "Amir Khan's father Shahmir Khan had his training in the Indore gharana and Amir Khan naturally came into this inheritance." To further confuse the situation, some authors actually describe Amir Khan as a musician unto himself without ties to any *gharana* (Saxena 1974; Wade 1984: 266). Does Amir Khan belong to the Dhanadhtha *gharana*, the Indore *gharana*, or none of the above?

In addition to having an unclear hereditary musical identity, Amir Khan's discipular connections and musical training were often brought into question. His father, Shahmir Khan, was actually a *sarangi* player (Wade 198: 266), which therefore disqualified Amir Khan from *gharana* identity and simultaneously tainted his claim to *khyal* performance. Furthermore, although Amir Khan received a few years of training from his father, he never actually fulfilled the social and musical obligation to spend multiple years studying with a recognized vocalist (Wade 1984: 266). Perhaps the uncertainty and illegitimacy surrounding Amir Khan's sociomusical identity destabilized his authority and permitted others to borrow and adopt his compositions. In this sense, Rajanji and Sajanji might have made a tactical decision to borrow

from Amir Khan since the possibility of infringing upon the stylistic boundaries of other *gharana*s was nullified or at least substantially obscured. By contrast, it would have be very surprising and perhaps offensive to the senior Agra *gharana* vocalist quoted above if Rajanji and Sajanji had borrowed a song that was composed in the sixteenth century by a revered predecessor of the Agra *gharana* such as Sujan Khan. In this sense, Rajanji and Sajanji carefully avoided controversy by strategically choosing to enact the process of musical hybridity through Amir Khan. Therefore, the decision to locate musical identity within hybridity does not appear to be a direct attempt at subverting the *Kalawant* caste or undermining the "authentic" *gharana*s; rather, musical hybridity emerges as a purely artistic choice through which the Benares *gharana* created an unprecedented musical identity.

When I was interviewing Anindyada, we discussed and analyzed the specific *khyal* composition that Rajanji and Sajanji had borrowed from Amir Khan. Anindyada was familiar with the syncretic musical processes of the Benares *gharana* since he had taught at the same school with Rajanji and Sajanji where he often engaged in musical debates. As any other self-acclaimed aficionado of North Indian classical music, Anindyada was also very familiar with Amir Khan's legendary compositions and his ambiguous position in the framework of distinct *gharana*s. While working on transcriptions and analyses, Anindyada and I realized that Rajanji and Sajanji's reinterpretation of Amir Khan's composition transposed the melody and replaced the lyrics from the original version. Although Rajanji and Sajanji modified these two components of the original composition, they utilized the same *tala* and *khyal* structure of Amir Khan's song. Their decision to modify the *raga* echoes performance practices from *thumri* in which pitches and *pakad* phrases from a variety of *raga*s are integrated; and their decision to substitute the lyrics reflects the genre of *khyal* in which lyrics are nothing more than vehicles for

melody. Through these selective modifications and alterations, Rajanji and Sajanji performed the syncretic artistic identity of the Benares *gharana* through a process of juxtaposing sounds and genres.

Transposing the original melody from Amir's Khan composition was one of two significant musical transformations that was enacted by Rajanji and Sajanji. The original melody in Amir Khan's *khyal* was derived from *rag* Hamsadhvani; the ascending and descending pitches of this *raga* are shown in **Figure 3.7**. *Rag* Hamsadhvani is essentially a major pentatonic scale except that the 6th scale degree (La in solfège) is replaced by the 7th scale degree (Ti in solfège). Although **Figure 3.7** shows *rag* Hamsadhvani built on an E♭ *sruti*, which is the way that Rajanji

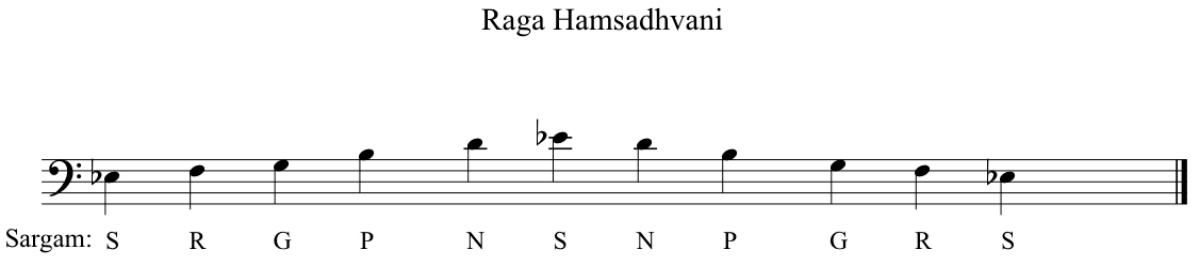

Figure 3.7: Transcription of *raga* Hamsadhvani that Rajanji and Sajanji transposed to a different *sruti* during their reinterpretation of Amir Khan's composition.

and Sajanji sang it, in Amir Khan's version the *raga* was built on a D♭ *sruti*.[15] While these two versions were performed in different *sruti*s, the pitch material in both renditions was still considered *rag* Hamsadhvani. In this sense, Rajanji and Sajanji abstracted one aspect from Amir

[15] In the context of North Indian classical music, *sruti* can be comfortably translated into Western musical terminology as "tonic".

Khan's original performance – *sruti* – and resituated it within the composition after enacting a modification. In other words, this process of extraction and reorientation created hybridity by juxtaposing a modified *raga* against its unmodified *tala* and *khyal* structure. The fluidity with which Rajanji and Sajanji approached the recreation of Amir Khan's *raga* reflects the influence of *thumri* in the Benares *gharana*. Although the genre of *khyal* does not permit flexibility with regard to *raga* rendition, the genre of *thumri* provides a forum in which vocalists can freely incorporate characteristics from a variety of *raga*s.[16] Although Rajanji and Sajanji did not include pitches or *pakad* phrases from other *raga*s their gesture towards *raga* modification suggests an influence from *thumri*.

In addition to altering the audible materials of Amir Khan's composition, Rajanji and Sajanji also modified the textual components of this song. When recreating Amir Khan's composition, these two vocalists substituted the original lyrics and transformed the linguistic meaning of the *khyal* composition. **Figure 3.8** displays the text that Amir Khan sang during the original composition and also the text that Rajanji and Sajanji used during their recreation. The lyrics used in both the original and the recreation were written in Braj bhasha; since Braj bhasha is uncommon, none of my informants were able to give me a complete and accurate translation of the texts. However, while discussing these texts with four different vocalists, it was clear that Amir Khan's composition praised Saraswati, the goddess of music, while Rajanji and Sajanji's composition praised Ganesha, the remover of obstacles. Although both the original text and the reinterpretation praised deities in the Hindu pantheon, the specific deity that the song addressed was different. In this sense, Rajanji and Sajanji expressed the hybridizing identity of the Benares

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[16] See the last paragraph in Chapter 2 **Sounding Performances: The Light Classical Genre of *Khyal***

Amir Khan's Lyrics

Sthayi

Jay matih Vilamba tyaja de
Magana guna de

Antara

Vidya guna Sarasa devi (alternate*: Vidya guna Amara devi*)
Janani jaga ki

Rajan and Sajan Mishra's Lyrics

Sthayi

Sree Ganapat Gajanan
Vijana harana sukhakanan magala dayaka prabhu sree

Antara

Sakala jagalini santapa haranadeba
Mangala dayaka prabhu sree

Figure 3.8: Different lyrics used by Rajanji and Sajanji during the reinterpretation.

gharana by fragmenting the lyrics of Amir Khan's song from the original context and inserting new textual meanings that were situated within the preexisting *tala* and *khyal* structure. Although the influence of *thumri* was expressed through Rajanji and Sajanji's approach to the *raga*, their equally fluid interpretation of the lyrics reflects an essential characteristic of *khyal*. In this high classical genre, the text is typically utilized as a vehicle for melody and is not considered important in itself. In this sense, Rajanji and Sajanji not only hybridized Amir Khan's composition but they also integrated aesthetic practices from *khyal* and *thumri*.

Although these two vocalists changed the lyrics of the original song and transposed the *raga* from D♭ to E♭, the rhythmic cycle and formal structure of the original composition were maintained. The formal structure of Amir Khan's song fits within the high classical genre of *khyal*. Although *khyal* is mainly an improvisatory genre there are typically four distinct sections in that frame these improvisations: *alap*, *sthayi*, *antara*, and *tans*.[17] This 4-part structure was presented in Amir Khan's original composition and was also maintained during Rajanji and Sajanji's rendition. **Figure 3.9** illustrates the pre-composed sections of the *sthayi* and *antara* from Rajanji and Sajanji's melodically transposed modification. In this instance, Rajanji and Sajanji selectively choose the formal structure of Amir Khan's composition as a distinct characteristic that would remain unmodified. This freedom of choice in reinterpreting another musician's composition displays the fluidity and combinatorial approach that Benares *gharana* vocalists use during musical performance. In addition to maintaining the formal *khyal* structure of Amir Khan's original composition, these two vocalists also maintained the rhythmic cycle. In

[17] See Chapter 2 **Performing Sounds: The High Classical Genre of *Khyal***

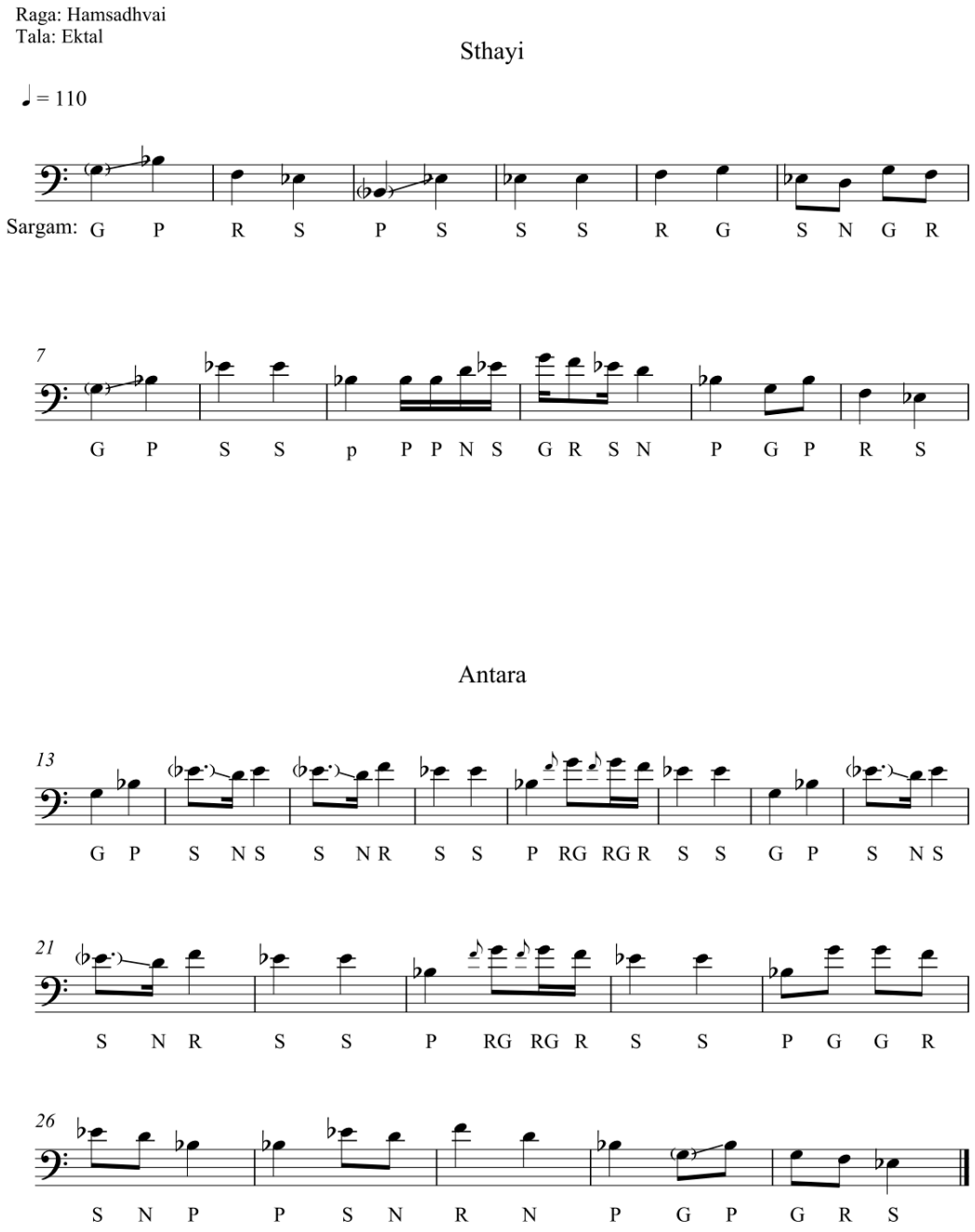


Figure 3.9: Transcription of the pre-composed sections for Rajanji and Sajanji's performance.

the original rendition, Amir Khan's *khyal* is set to the 12-beat *tala* known as *ektal*.[18] Similar to the formal structure of Amir Khan's composition, Rajanji and Sajanji chose not to modify the rhythmic structure from the original rendition. Instead of reinterpreting all of the musical characteristics from Amir Khan's composition, it seems as though Rajanji and Sajanji carefully selected the specific components that would be maintained or modified during their performance.

In reviewing the four components from Amir Khan's song that were selectively transformed or preserved, we can further understand the hybridizing identity of the Benares *gharana*. On the one hand, these two vocalists maintained the formal *khyal* structure of Amir Khan's composition and also utilized the same rhythmic cycle. However, on the other hand, Rajanji and Sajanji transposed the original *raga* from D♭ to E♭ and sang lyrics in praise of Ganesha instead of Saraswati. Through the flexible approach to *raga* transposition, Rajanji and Sajanji conveyed an influence from *thumri*; simultaneously they echoed an essential characteristic from *khyal* by freely interpreting the lyrics. In this instance, the hybrid identity of the Benares *gharana* was not only expressed through the decision to juxtapose the modified and maintained musical elements from Amir Khan's composition but it was also reflected in the process of integrating aesthetics from both *thumri* and *khyal*.

Hearing Identity: Integrating the Sounds and Sentiments of *Khyal* and *Thumri*

One of the defining characteristics of *thumri* is the musical expression of sentimental melodrama. Deshpande (1973: 19) suggests that *thumri* "goes straight to the heart of the listener with the full force of its emotion." Similarly, while describing the aesthetic process of *bol banao thumri*, Manuel (1989: 134) states, "The singer concentrates on the sentiment of the line –

[18] See Chapter 2 **Figure 2.2**

usually, unrequited longing – and endeavors to interpret it musically." Although these textual sources emphasis the interpretation of *thumri* as emotional or sentimental, a Benares *gharana* vocalist, Siddheshwari Devi (1907-1976), offers a different interpretation: "In thumri, the purpose of improvisation is to depict the *bhava* or mood of the lyric in as many ways as possible and to enhance its beauty by delicate variations" (Jagannathan 1973: 19). In this instance, the same expressive musical feature from *thumri*, which Manuel calls the "sentiment of the line", Devi calls, "*bhava*". By utilizing this terminology to describe the musical features of *thumri*, Devi hybridizes this marginalized courtesan genre – historically assigned to the Benares *gharana* – with the authenticating power of *rasa* theory in the *Natyasastra*.[19]

While I was studying with Benares *gharana* vocalists in Calcutta, I repeatedly heard reenactments of Devi's conceptual hybridity. Deepakji explained:

> The thing in *thumri* is the *bhav* [he sings a melismatic phrase with abundant usage of *mir*]. The *bhav* is everywhere in the *thumri* singing… always we are sing this way: too much *bhav*, too much feeling, too much the emotions… no *bhav*: no *thumri* – it's like this.

Similarly, when I was interviewing Anindyada, he stated:

> In light classical *thumri* you have to put little theatrical because of you show your emotion [he sings a swelling *mir* phrase with lyrics addressed to Lord Krishna]. So the

[19] See Unni (1998) Ch. 6 "The Chapter on Sentiments" and Schwartz (2004: 15-16) for a discussion of the term *bhava* in *rasa* theory and the *Natyasastra*.

> way of singing to Lord Krishna, you have to be the theatrical you have to express this same thing which they call *bhav*, emotion… that is the thing of thumri.

In this sense, both a professional vocalist in the Benares *gharana* (Deepakji) and an affiliated instrumentalist and aficionado (Anindyada), suggested that *bhav* or – more akin to Manuel's language – the theatrical expression of emotions is the essential characteristic of *thumri* (i.e. "no *bhav*: no *thumri*").

Moreover, during these interviews, I discovered that Benares *gharana* vocalists integrate the essential *bhav* element from *thumri* into their *khyal* performances. For instance, while I was interviewing Anindyada and listening to a recorded *khyal* rendition from two Benares *gharana* vocalists, Anindyada asserted, "Intelligent Benares musicians – they took from [*thumri*] and put it into *khyal*." Then Anindyada asked me to pause the *khyal* recording that we were listening to and repeat a specific section; when we were reviewing this particular musical passage, he said, "You'll find the theatrical [and] also melodrama [he pauses while listening carefully] *thumri* expresses emotion… this is the *bhav*." Similarly, when I was listening to Deepakji perform *khyal* renditions at his house concert, I saw him repeatedly ask the *tabla* accompanist to play softer and with more *bhav*. The sequence of photos in **Figure 3.10** depicts one of the many instances in which Deepakji was directing his *tabla* accompanist to play with more *bhav*. Although Deepakji typically accompanied these hand gestures with verbal instructions in Bengali, there was one instance in which he used English to say, "soft, soft, more *bhav*." After the concert was over I asked Deepakji about his interactions with the *tabla* performer; Deepakji said that the *tabla*

accompanist was trained in the musical style of the Farukhabad *gharana* and therefore it was difficult for him to accompany a vocalist from the Benares *gharana*:

> "When I am singing with the *bhav* the *tabla* needs to be coming with me also. It cannot be: I am playing the *bhav* he is playing the loud sound, the hard sound… No, it cannot be this, we need the – what do you call? – music unity!"

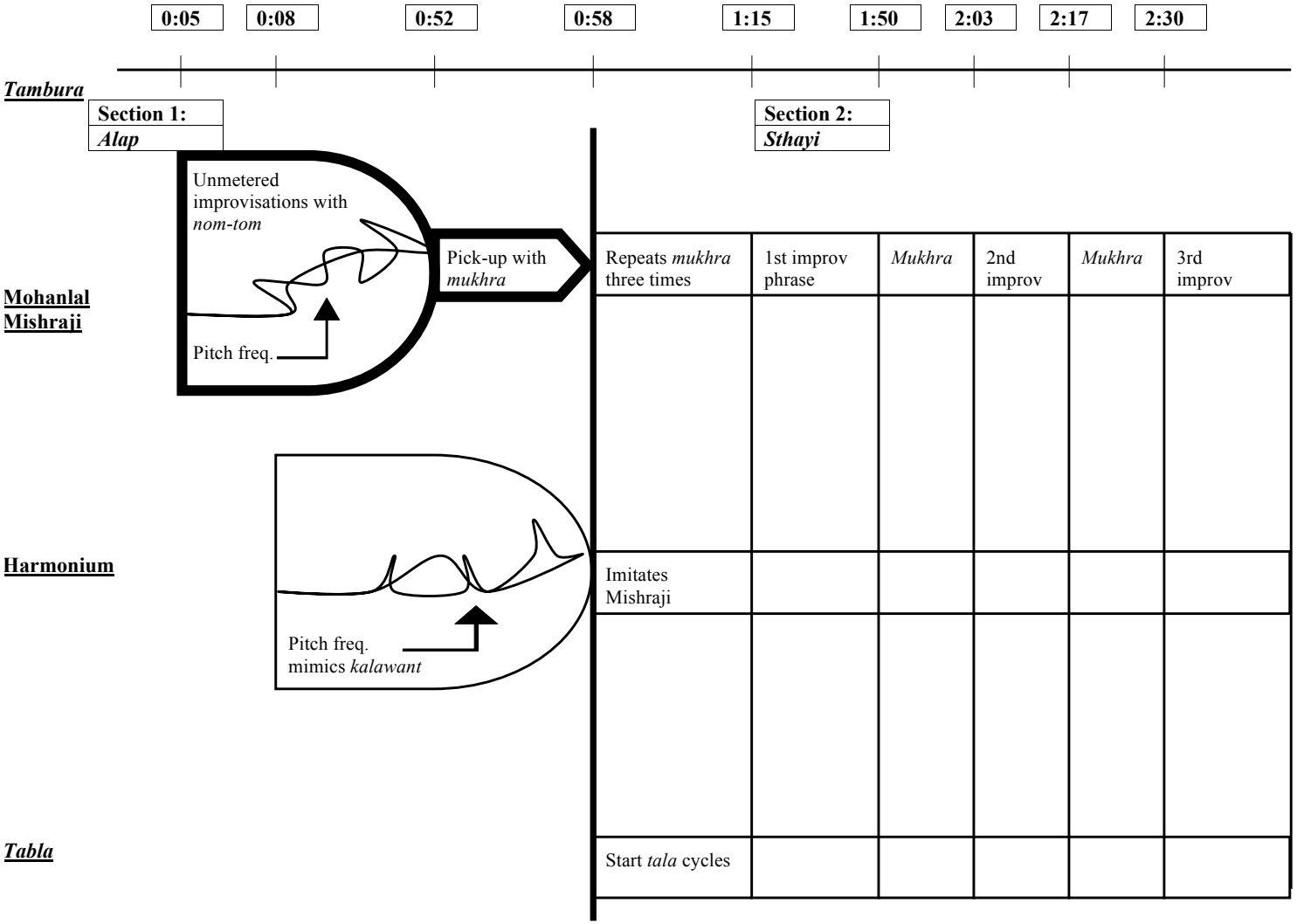
My interviews with Anindyada and observations of Deepakji's *khyal* concert suggested that this *bhav* element was not only an integral component of Benares *thumri* but that it was only a critical aspect in Benares *gharana khyal* renditions.

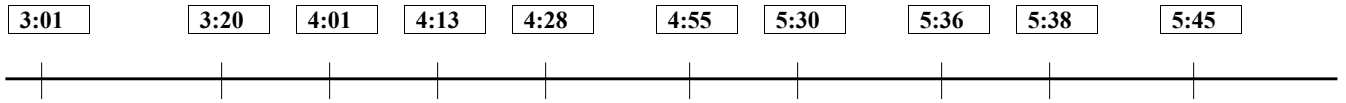
While interviewing Manasidi – a nonhereditary vocalist in the Benares *gharana* – I began to develop an appreciation for the specific ways in which the *bhav* from *thumri* was hybridized with *khyal*: "*Thumri* is a different subject, *khyal* is a different subject: you cannot mix [pause] you cannot mix, but you can take the *sound ingredients*" [her verbal emphasis]. In this instance, Manasidi suggests that *all* of the musical qualities in *thumri* and *khyal* cannot be combined since they are incompatible genres (or "subjects"); however, abstracted musical characteristics (or "sound ingredients") from one genre can be added to another. In this sense, it seems as though the juxtaposing model of musical hybridity – which I used to explain the imitation of instruments and the modification of Amir Khan's *khyal* – was also functioning to create genre integration. Furthermore, the musical characteristic derived from *thumri* and integrated with *khyal* was an expressive technique that Benares *gharana* vocalists referred to as *bhav*. By naming the core musical feature of *thumri* "*bhav*" instead of "sentiment" or "emotion", the Benares vocalists authenticated this light classical genre through the *Natyasastra* and justified their decision to

hybridize it with the high classical genre of *khyal*. This authenticating taxonomy illustrates a conceptual expression of their hybrid musical identity and situates their musical performances on the threshold of both *khyal* and *thumri*.

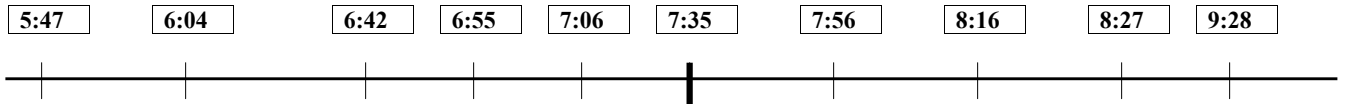
Deepakji's father, Pandit Mohan Lal Mishra, gave me a CD that included a number of his *thumri* and *khyal* performances. The recordings that were included in this unpublished CD illustrated another modality through which Benares *gharana* vocalists hybridized *thumri* and *khyal*. By using the same style of graphic transcription from the previous chapter, I examined the structural features in one of Mohan Lalji's *khyal* recordings. In this instance, my musical analysis of the structural processes in Mohan Lalji's *khyal* rendition of *rag* Hamir, suggest that the hybridizing aesthetic of the Benares *gharana* emerged through the juxtaposition of distinct musical structures from both *thumri* and *khyal*.

Figure 3.11 is a diagrammatic representation of Mohan Lalji's *khyal* performance progressing through time. Within this performance there are two structural features that create an audibly distinct *khyal* identity: the absence of a *madhya* section and the inclusion of *sargam tan*s. As I have previously mentioned, the *madhya* section is an architectural element that is only utilized in *thumri*; contrarily, *sargam tan*s are seldom included in *thumri* renditions. Therefore, by excluding the *thumri*-specific *madhya* section and including the *khyal*-specific *sargam tan*s, Mohan Lalji situates this performance in the high classical genre of *khyal*. However, he simultaneously hybridizes these features of *khyal* with structural characteristics that emerge from *thumri*. The *alap* section in this *khyal* performance only lasts 53 seconds; in comparison with the 30 minutes or more that is typically dedicated to the *alap* section in a *khyal* performance, these 53 seconds evoke the genre of *thumri*. Similarly, the frequency with which Mohan Lalji repeats


0:05
0:08
0:52
0:58
1:15
1:50
2:03
2:17
2:30
Tambura
Section 1:
Alap
Section 2:
Sthayi
Unmetered improvisations with nom-tom
Pick-up with mukhra
Pitch freq.
Mohanlal Mishraji
Repeats mukhra three times
1st improv phrase
Mukhra
2nd improv
Mukhra
3rd improv
Harmonium
Imitates Mishraji
Pitch freq. mimics kalawant
Tabla
Start tala cycles

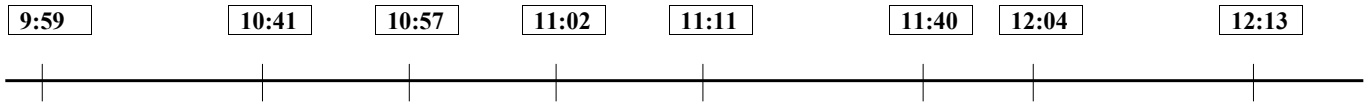


Repeats *mukhra* three times	4th improv	*Mukhra*	*Sargam tan*	2nd *sargam tan*	Speaks to audience	3rd *sargam tan*	Speaks to audience	4th *sargam tan*	Speaks to audience
Continue Imitating									
Continue *tala* cycles									

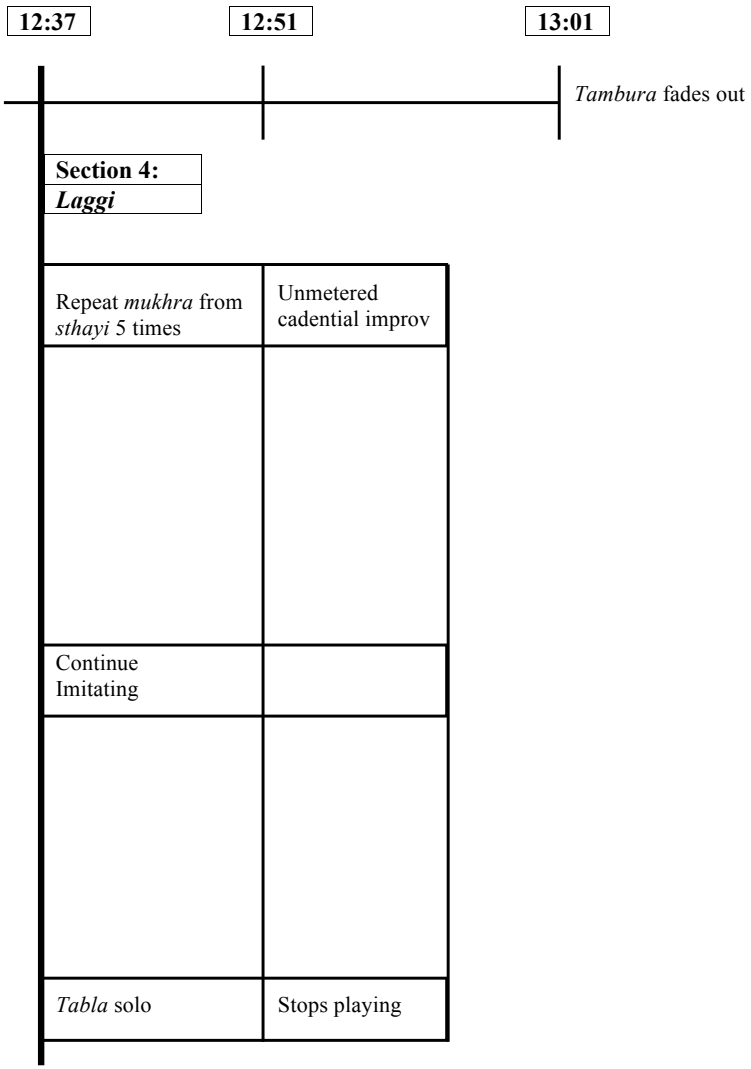


Section 3:
Antara

5th *sargam tan*	6 variations on *mukhra*	5th improv		*Akar* improv	*Antara* verse w/o improv	*Antara* verse w/o improv	*Mukhra* from *sthayi*	Speaks to audience	*Antara* verse w/o improv
Continue Imitating									
Continue *tala* cycles			*Tabla* solo						



Repeat *mukhra* from *sthayi* 9 times	6th *sargam tan*	*Mukhra* from *sthayi*	7th *sargam tan*	Repeat *mukhra* from *sthayi* 5 times	6th improv	Repeat *mukhra* from *sthayi* 2 times	*Antara* verse w/o improv
Continue Imitating							
Tabla solo				*Tabla* solo			


12:37
12:51
13:01
Tambura fades out
Section 4:
Laggi
Repeat *mukhra* from *sthayi* 5 times
Unmetered cadential improv
Continue Imitating
Tabla solo
Stops playing

the *mukhra* refrain in the *sthayi* section of this *khyal* performance resembles the cadential patterns that are commonly employed in *thumri*. Moreover, in the *antara* section of this *khyal*, Mohan Lalji returned to the *mukhra* refrain from the *sthayi* section instead of improvising an original *mukhra* derived from the *antara*-specific characteristics. In addition, there are three instances in which the *tabla* performer enacts a status reversal by becoming a soloist through a series of virtuosic improvisations. While the *tabla* player comes to the fore during these three virtuosic solos, Mohan Lalji transforms into an accompanist by cyclically repeating the *mukhra*. This integration and appreciation of the *tabla* performer as a soloist is characteristic of *thumri* that is seldom employed in the genre of *khyal*. Finally, there are two structural features that do not fully resemble either *khyal* or *thumri*. Although the concluding section in this *khyal* incorporates the *thumri*-specific *laggi* section, this *laggi* is unusually short: in Mohan Lalji's recording the *laggi* only lasts 14 seconds whereas in a typical *thumri* performances it lasts at least 1-2 minutes and gradually increases in rhythmic density and virtuosity. In this sense, Mohan Lalji gestures towards a *laggi* section without a full realization. Similarly, although there

Figure 3.12: The characteristics from *thumri* are in red; the characteristics from *khyal* are in blue; and the characteristics that are neither *khyal* nor *thumri* are in purple.

are multiple *tan*s sung throughout this composition, there is never a concluding *tan* section in which the vocalist presents his virtuosic limits. By creating a unique set of musical structures that are neither *khyal* nor *thumri* and by integrating these structures with distinct architectural features from both *thumri* and *khyal*, Mohan Lalji creates a musical ritual that is neither *khyal* nor *thumri* while simultaneously both *khyal* and *thumri* (See **Figure 3.12**).

Patronizing Identity: 19th Century *Raja*s and a 21st Century Undergraduate

After I got off the phone with the Indian musicologist who told me that I could not study the Benares *gharana* because it was not a real *gharana*, I went into the dining room where Manasidi was eating lunch and tried to figure out why the Benares *gharana* was not "real". Doing my best to fulfill the role of a subservient disciple, I tried to ask Manasidi critical ethnographic questions as indirectly as possible. When I realized that I was not getting anywhere, I paid my fees for the voice lesson and bid her farewell until next week. I was not able to figure out anything substantial until I started interviewing musicians who I was not taking voice lesson from; one of these musicians was so staunchly opposed to the "unreal" aspects of the Benares *gharana* that he described their style as musical prostitution. In essence, these antagonist interpretations undermined the Benares *gharana* by claiming that this lineage of musicians was constantly borrowing and therefore did not have a distinct musical identity. On the contrary, I argued that this disposition to borrow was actually an expression of their distinct stylistic identity: musical hybridity.

This style of hybridity was enacted through musical juxtaposition: by extracting instrumental sounds and gestures from *sarangi* and *shehnai*, Deepak Mishra created identifiable

melodic passages that were situated within *khyal* performances. Similarly, when borrowing a composition from Amir Khan, Rajan and Sajan Mishra utilized flexible approaches from both *thumri* and *khyal* to inform their decisions on whether or not to modify the *raga*, *tala*, text, or formal structure. Deepakji's father and Rajanji's brother-in-law, Mohan Lal Mishra, sang a *khyal* rendition in which he juxtaposed musical structures from both *khyal* and *thumri* and also innovated novel musical structures that were neither *khyal* nor *thumri*. Not only was this style of hybridity expressed performatively but it was also enacted conceptually: by authenticating the essential emotional and sentimental aspects of *thumri* with terminology from the *Natyasastra*, Benares *gharana* vocalists legitimized their historical associations with this genre and also justified their tendency to hybridize *thumri* and *khyal*. Moreover, by imitating an instrument as

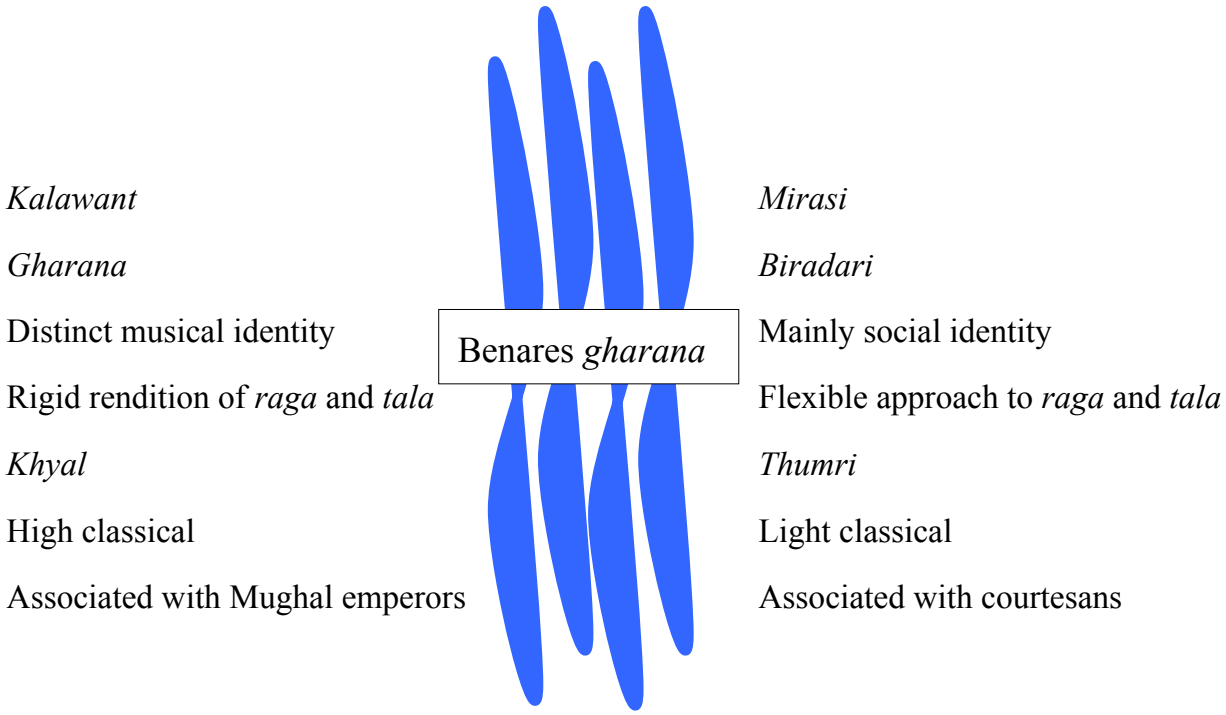


Figure 3.13: The Benares *gharana* creates a bridge between the dyadic framework of sociomusical activities from the previous chapter.

neutral as *shehnai*, borrowing compositions from a vocalist with an ambiguous sociomusical identity, and justifying their *thumri* history through the *Natyasastra*, the Benares *gharana* vocalists perform a strategic avoidance of sociopolitical controversies that might have arisen from their integrative approach. In this sense, the Benares *gharana* chose hybridity as a musical process to create a distinct stylistic identity and not as a musical statement to challenge the musicians who called them "unreal".

Through this interpretation of the Benares *gharana*, I am promoting the self-defining autobiography that was written by Deepakji and Prakashji and affirming that the Benares *gharana* is in fact a real *gharana*. As a 21st century academic patron of the Benares *gharana*, I am joining a lineage of patrons that have been promoting the Benares *gharana* since its birth: in the nineteenth century, the *raja*s who ruled the city of Benares actively promoted the integration of high and low art and impelled the Benares *gharana* into hybridity.

4

Historicizing Identity through Patronization

Nineteenth Century Rajas Create the Hybrid Identity of the Benares Gharana

Setting the Stage

In the mid-nineteenth century, the dissolution of the Mughal Empire and the rise of the British Raj and the East India Company created a political and technological scenario in which musical patronage was reconfigured. The Mughal tradition of lavish artistic patronage was replaced by a diverse array of underfunded local *raja*s and emergent wealthy urbanites. During this period of restricted and fragmented economic support, musicians were exposed to a variety of regionally specific aesthetics and newly generated artistic sensibilities that contrasted with the centralization of Mughali patronization. Classical vocalists confronted these emerging economic challenges by constructing *gharana* lineages, monopolizing distinct stylistic identities and accommodating regionally specific aesthetics. In this period of transformation, the local *raja*s in the city of Benares actively promoted the integration of high and low arts. This local emphasis on patronizing an aesthetic of integration created the hybrid stylistic identity of the Benares *gharana*.

Creating *Gharana*s: Political and Technological Transformations Modify Patronization

Muhammad Shah (1702-1748) was the last emperor of the Mughal dynasty who could afford to maintain the royal custom of lavish artistic patronage (Wade 1984: 6-7). Musicians who were employed in royal courts during this period of sovereign economic support typically received a land grant and a healthy salary of monthly remunerations (Owens 1987: 166). Many

of the essential aesthetics and professional practices of North Indian classical music emerged within the elite contexts of these royal courts (Qureshi 2002: 85; Wade 1984: 5-6). For instance, during Muhammad Shah's prosperous reign, two renowned *dhrupad* vocalists, Niamat Khan Sadarang and Firuz Khan Adarang, developed and transmitted the high classical genre of *khyal* (Chandra 1999: 446). This new genre evidently appealed to Muhammad Shah's aesthetics in such a provocative way that he began composing *khyal*s himself (*ibid*.). While the Mughal dynasty and its exuberant musical patronage started to decline after Muhammad Shah's death, the British Empire and the British East India Company were gradually establishing political and economic dominance across the subcontinent.

The India Act of 1784 effectively created a legal context in which the British Empire could rise to political power while not interfering with the economic interests of the East India Company (Wade 1984: 8). As the British Crown began establishing political and military control across the subcontinent, unruly or disobedient local *raja*s were displaced and their territories annexed into colonial governance (*ibid*.). For instance, in 1818 the last significant adversary of British dominance, the Marathas, were defeated in a series of battles and their emperor was transformed into a political puppet (Masselos 2005: 10-1). Contrarily, the *raja*s and aristocrats who promptly submitted to colonial hegemony were offered special treatment and later acknowledged through governmental representation (Wade 1984: 8-9). Roughly a hundred years after Muhammad Shah's death, the British Empire exiled the last Mughal sultan, murdered his sons, and stamped out the remaining whispers of resistance in the Mutiny of 1857 (Hintze 1997: 9; Wade 1984: 8). In 1858, Parliament passed the Government of India Act to transfer all of the political and economic control to the British Crown and fully realize the implications that were built into the India Act of 1784 (Wolpert 2009: 246). In the emergent British Raj, there were 10

provinces directly controlled by the Crown and an additional 562 minor princely states that were under indirect colonial rule (Wade 1984: 9).

Figure 4.1: The territory to the right of the curving black line roughly illustrates the extent of the British Empire in the 1800s. By 1860, all of the land depicted on this map was British territory.

During the same period in which the British Empire was establishing political dominance across the subcontinent, private entrepreneurs from Britain and Western Europe were investing in the technological modernization of India (Wolpert 2009: 250). By 1853, the first 21 miles of railroad tracks were laid down in India (Neuman 1978: 206) and four years later that number

increased to 432 miles (Wolpert 2009: 250-1). Roughly a decade after these seminal investments, there were nearly 5,000 miles of railroad tracks and a rail line that connected Calcutta and Bombay through Allahabad (*ibid*.); five years later, in 1875, this rail line was connected to Delhi (Neuman 1978: 207). While the establishment of modern transportation progressed with impressive speed, the development of telegraph communications advanced with greater rapidity: in 1851, the first experimental telegraph line was only 82 miles but by 1855 there more than were 3,000 miles of telegraph wire connecting Agra, Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, and Peshwar (*ibid*.). Only 22 years after the British Parliament had passed the Government of India Act, there were 9,000 miles of railroad tracks, 20,000 miles of telegraph lines, and roughly £150 million invested in the technological modernization of the Indian subcontinent (Wolpert 2009: 251-2).

It was precisely during this period of dramatic political and technological transformations that the *gharana* was born (Neuman 1980: 105; McNeil 2004: 148-50).[1] With the decline of the Mughal Empire and the dissolution of lavish artistic patronage, musicians who had previously crafted their aesthetics for royal audiences were confronted with a scarcity of economic support.[2] This decrease in sovereign finance impelled the musicians and their performances into an unprecedented level of commodification and competition. To control the emergence of widespread competition, musicians in the mid-nineteenth century organized into distinct hereditary lineages and claimed ownership of specific musical styles (Neuman 1978: 208). By monopolizing distinct musical sounds, *gharana* members were able to limit the prevalence of

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[1] McNeil (2004: 151) argues, "the 'birth' of a gharana cannot be traced to any one specific occasion but rather to a process of gradual acceptance over an imprecise period of time."

[2] See Neuman (1978: 200 & 207) for a table and accompanying discussion that illustrate the decrease in musical sponsorship and increase in professional competition.

specific aural commodities and inject their performances with these scare musical products (*ibid*.). Similarly, by consolidating artistic production into a single hereditary corporation of patrilineal relatives, these musical specialists limited the number of students who they were obliged to teach; this reduction in educational efforts not only decreased future competition with current students but it also allowed specialists to focus their time and energy on teaching only their sons or nephews (*ibid*.). Furthermore, the acceleration of technological modernization that resulted in railroad transportation and telegraph communication exposed musicians to a diversity of anonymous audience members (Neuman 1980: 169).[3] To confront the emergent challenge of modern mobility, *gharana*s created sociomusical identities and sets of stylistic expectations that were meaningful to an otherwise naïve audience (Neuman 1978: 208-9). In this sense, the technological and political developments that emerged with the British Empire enacted a sociomusical revolution that transformed the artists of royal courts into the commodities of imperial economy: the *gharana* was born.

Following the dissolution of Mughal patronage, the task of economically supporting musicians was transferred to local *raja*s controlling fragmented states and emergent wealthy urbanites (Wade 1984: 9). Many *raja*s and urban leaders embraced the interests and pursuits of their British counterparts by developing an enthusiasm for horseracing and polo (*ibid*.). The few aristocrats who could afford to sustain the royal tradition of lavish artistic patronage either chose

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[3] See Jones (1989: 83 & 215) for discussion of the ways in which technological modernizations – in particular photography and the printing press – also affected socioreligious movements; in other words, although I am only examining the relationship between music and technology, there were numerous technological modernizations in the nineteenth century and a multiplicity of resulting social changes.

to support musicians from multiple *gharana*s or developed a courtly specialization in only one *gharana* (*ibid*.). For example, the Gaekwad *raja*s of Baroda patronized *khyal* singers from multiple *gharana*s while the *raja*s in Gwalior and Rampur offered economic support to single hereditary lineages (*ibid*.). During this period of fragmented and diversified economic support, musicians were exposed to a variety of regionally specific aesthetics and newly generated artistic sensibilities that contrasted with the centralization of Mughali patronization.[4] For instance, the gentrified *bhadralok* society of Calcutta developed a particularly puritan repugnance for the perceived licentiousness of North Indian classical music (McNeil 2004: 148). However, even though these reservations informed the opinions of many *bhadralok* members, they still patronized the musicians and in some instances became their students (*ibid*.). As a means of attending to these regionally specific aesthetic sensibilities, Sourindra Mohun Tagore changed the name of the *sarod* to the "sharadiya *veena*" (*ibid*.). By changing instrumental nomenclature, Tagore evoked the historical authority of the ancestral *veena* and purified the *sarod* of its recent degeneracy (*ibid*.). In this sense, the scarcity of courtly patronage in the post-Mughal subcontinent impelled *gharana* musicians to modify their musical practices in order to accommodate regionally specific aesthetics in the newly emerging courts.

Becoming Patrons: Benares *Raja*s Promote Aesthetics of Hybridity

In the mid-eighteenth century, political and economic control over the city of Benares was situated between two regional powers; by the late eighteenth century, this administrative power had transferred to the British East India Company and the regional rulers in Benares were

[4] See McNeil's (2004: 148) discussion of the changing networks of patronage that unfolded "when colonial hegemony displaced premodern, feudal political structures across North India".

absolved of their governmental responsibilities. Without the bureaucratic and financial obligations of their predecessors, the Benares *raja*s reallocated their influence and resources to the patronization of hybridized artistic and literary pursuits. For instance, the practice of reciting a sixteenth century text that was historically associated with the lower castes received an unprecedented level of royal support and produced socioartistic syncretism. In this instance, Benares *raja*s in the mid-nineteenth century patronized performing arts and literary pursuits that integrated or hybridized aesthetics from a variety of socioeconomic origins.

As the imperial power of the Mughal Empire declined in the eighteenth century, two emerging levels of regional power sought political and economic control over Benares.[5] Nawab Wazir of Awadh sustained alleged allegiances with the weakening Mughal Empire while he simultaneously strengthened his control of the Awadh kingdom and extended his political influence into the city of Benares (Lutgendorf 1989: 39).[6] During this same period of political reconfiguration, Balwant Singh of the twice-born Bhumihar caste arose to power in his native city of Benares to claim the title of *raja* in 1738 (Freitag 1989a: 21-2).[7] Although Nawab Wazir

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[5] See Cohn (1962: 313-4 & 2003: 124-5) for a systematic taxonomy that distinguishes between different levels of political power in eighteenth century India – Imperial, Secondary, Regional, and Local – and an accompanying case study that applies this taxonomy to the Benares region.

[6] See Jones (1989: 50) who referred to Awadh as the "kingdom of Awadh" which encompassed a significant portion of the present-day Uttar Pradesh; see Freitag (1989b: 5) who mentioned Lucknow as the capital city of the Nawabi of Awadh; see Mukherjee (1982: 85) for various spellings of Awadh – namely, "Oudh" or "Oude".

[7] The Bhumihar "twice-born caste enjoyed high status throughout north India, where its members were prominent landowners and tenants with favorable terms" (Freitag 1989a: 21).

maintained external political dominance of Benares throughout Balwant Singh's reign (1738-1770), their diplomatic relations were tenuous and Balwant Singh repeatedly challenged Nawab Wazir's power (Cohn 1962: 315; Lutgendorf 1989: 39).

> The Raja's obligations to the Nawabs were the regular payment of revenue and provision of troops when requested. The Raja of Banaras at every opportunity tried to avoid fulfillment of these obligations; and on several occasions the Nawab sent troops to try to bring his subordinate to terms, if not to capture and kill him. On these occasions Balwant Singh would retreat with his treasure and army to the jungles of Mirzapur. After a time the Nawab, distracted by similar behavior in other parts of his state or by his intervention in imperial politics, would compromise with Balwant Singh and withdraw, at which time Balwant Singh would resume control (Cohn 1962: 315).

Aside from these intermittent economic obligations and militaristic invasions, Balwant Singh functioned as the relatively independent and economically successful *raja* of Benares until his death in 1770 (Freitag 1989b: 22). Although Chait Singh's (1770-1781) succession to the Benares throne was initially disputed by Nawab Wazir, the East India Company nullified these claims by displacing the Awadh kingdom in 1775 and obtaining nominal control over Benares (*ibid*.: Lutgendorf 1989: 42). To acknowledge the power and independence that was previously established by the Benares *raja*s, the East India Company did not directly control Benares until Chait Singh rebelled against Warren Hastings' (1732-1818) overt extortions in 1781 (Freitag

1989a: 22; Freitag 1989b: 10; Wolpert 2009: 199).[8] After this alleged rebellion, the Easy India Company replaced Chait Singh with his younger relative, Mehip Narayan; this naïve and apparently epileptic ruler quickly signed away his authority in an agreement with the East India Company in 1794 (Freitag 1989a: 22; Freitag 1989b: 10). When Udit Narayan Singh ascended to the symbolic throne of the Benares *raja* in 1795, the political power of the entire region had transferred away from both the *raja*s of Benares and the *nawab*s of Awadh and into the imperial hands of the East India Company (Lutgendorf 1989: 42). Within this emergent colonial context, *raja* Udit was no longer preoccupied with the political, economic, and militaristic duties of his predecessors (*ibid*.; Dalmia 1996: 76); free to devote his influence and resources to alternative aristocratic pursuits, *raja* Udit created the "greatest flowering of *Manas* patronage at the Banaras court" (Lutgendorf 1989: 42). As a text that was written in the vernacular and made available to the uneducated castes, royal patronage of *Manas* recitation helped create enacted a gesture towards socioartistic hybridity.

Goswami Tulsidas – a Brahmin poet-saint who lived in Benares during the sixteenth century – wrote the *Manas* in 1574 (Lutgendorf 1989b: 272). This epic poem recreated the *Ramayana* through vernacular translation and unorthodox reinterpretation: Tulsidas' translation dislocated the *Ramayana* from its singular association with the Brahman caste and the Sanskrit script and relocated the epic poem within the Awadhi vernacular and made it available to a multiplicity of castes (*ibid*.). This translation performed an act of reinterpretation upon the

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[8] Warren Hastings was appointed as the governor of Fort William – a military base that was erected in the emerging colonial capital of Calcutta (Wolpert 2009: 179). British Parliament impeached him for the monetary demands that he made upon the richest Indian tributaries – the *raja* of Benares and the Nawab of Awadh (*ibid*.: 199).

narrative by emphasizing "devotion over orthodoxy… [and] shared brotherhood over community and caste divisions" (Freitag 1989a: 31). Furthermore, the text "constantly admonishes its audience to "sing", "narrate", and "reverently listen to" its verses" (Lutgendorf 1989a: 38); in this sense, the practice of oral exegesis was infused into the *Manas* through distinct passage that encouraged oral performances. At the time of its authorship, many exegetics were casteless *sadhus* (or ascetic saints) whose messages of devotional egalitarianism were aptly rendered through recitations of the unorthodox *Manas* (*ibid*.). The social and performative contexts of sixteenth century *Manas* recitations manifested popular followings among Vaishnava devotees and *sadhus* in the liberal Ramanandi sect; these street performers and their vernacular storytelling did not appeal to the religious and political elite in sixteenth century Benares (Lutgendorf 1989a: 39). This divide was not only expressed through elitist opposition to the oral exegesis of the *Manas* but there were also sentiments of counter-opposition embodied by legends in which the *Manas* triumphed over Brahminic resistance (*ibid*.). *Raja* Udit's patronage of *Manas* exegetics did not necessarily create *artistic* hybridity since the performance itself did not experience dramatic changes; however, this patronage dislocated the oral exegesis of *Manas* from its contexts within street performances among uneducated castes and relocated this performance within the royal courts among aristocratic *raja*s. By promoting *Manas* recitation in the aristocratic court, *raja* Udit supported the integration and hybridization of aesthetics and artistic interests from higher and lower castes in the nineteenth century.

Similar styles of patronage that encouraged the integration of higher and lower castes were reflected in the literary pursuits and visual arts that *raja* Udit supported: Gokulnath Bandijan and Parag Kavi were two scholars in the Benares court who translated the *Mahabharata* and the *Amarakosa* into vernacular idioms (Dalmia 1996: 77). Although these

translations did not enact the unorthodox reinterpretations that were imbedded in Tulsidas' *Manas*, the recreation of essential Brahminic texts within popular languages suggests a gesture towards egalitarianism and caste integration. Although the majority of *raja* Udit's patronage focused on hybridized pursuits within the Indian population, he also supported the assimilation of British aesthetics. Through interactions with colonial politicians living in Benares, *raja* Udit developed an appreciation for British painting (*ibid*.: 81). This artistic interest was reflected in his patronage of Dallu Lal (1790-1860), Kamlapati (1760-1838), Gopal Chand, Lal Chand, Shiva Ram, and Suraj Ram; these illustrious painters used British techniques of water coloring and shading to fulfill the royal commission for paintings that chronicled important events, royal personages, and famous courtesans (*ibid*.). Similar to *Manas* patronage, these examples of British artistic techniques and vernacular translations of Sanskrit texts reflect the royal disposition to dislocate artistic or literary traditions from their original social contexts and resituate these pursuits within novel scenarios. For instance, although the use of British painting techniques is nothing more than adoption, the depiction of Indian royalty, Indian courtesans, and Indian courtly occasions through British aesthetics is a hybridized artistic gesture. In other words, representing local phenomena through colonial technique creates artistic materials that juxtapose and hybridize India and Britain.

The patronage of hybridity that was initiated by *raja* Udit in 1795 was perpetuated into the late nineteenth century by his successor Ishvariprasad Narayan Singh (1835-1889). An illustrious literary figure in *raja* Ishvariprasad's court named Dev Kavi or Kasthajihva Swami engaged the erudite tradition of Sanskrit commentary on the *Ramayana*, *Bhagavatapurana*, and *Yogasutra* while simultaneously pursuing the less esoteric practice of Hindi commentary on Tulsidas' *Manas* (*ibid*.: 79-80). Although the majority of Kasthajihva's scholarship was directed

towards literary commentary, he also composed verses for two genres of folk songs known as *kajri* and *hori* (*ibid*.). In this instance, *raja* Ishvariprasad offered economic support to an intellectual figure who pursued literary scholarship in both Sanskrit and Hindi while still engaging the unrefined folk traditions of *kajri* and *hori*. Pursuing literary and musical practices from diverse social stratums positioned Kasthajihva within the community of hybridizing scholars and artists that were emerging from the royal courts of Benares.

Similarly, *raja* Ishvariprasad's patronage offered economic support to an actor and playwright who significantly altered Tulsidas' *Manas* and was later known as the father of Hindi theater: Bharatendu Harischandra (1850-1885). Harischandra modified the oral exegesis of Tulsidas' *Manas* through a series of literary and performative transformations: he included longer segments of dialogue within the text, incorporated verses from Kasthajihva's Hindi commentaries, and designed the programmatic presentation of *Manas* after Parsi theater (*ibid*.: 82). In this instance, Harischandra created exponential levels of hybridity through the integration of materials that were already hybridized: Tulsidas' *Manas* (which was dislocated from the Brahminic Sanskrit through vernacular translation and reinterpretation) juxtaposed Kasthajihva's Hindi commentaries (which emerged from an intellectual figure who also composed folk songs) within performance programs that were derived from theatrical aesthetics developed by Iranian Parsis living in India.

Additional hybridizing metamorphoses were enacted upon the performative recitation of *Manas* by incorporating a genre of folk music known as *biraha* (Freitag 1989a: 34). Even though this style of folk singing was an isolated and rural genre of music in the 1880s, *biraha* still found its way into the royal court of the Benares *raja* (Grierson 1886: 196-246; Marcus 1989: 93). Furthermore, as the practice of *Manas* recitation grew in popularity among both the higher and

lower castes, "hundreds of its verses entered popular speech as aphorisms, and its stanzas were set to seasonal melodies like *kajli* and *chaiti* and performed by urban and rural folksingers" (Lutgendorf 1989a: 45).[9] In this instance, there were three layers of socioartistic hybridity imbedded in the *Manas* text: Tulsidas' reinterpretations of the *Ramayana* enacted the first level of socioartistic hybridity; *raja* Udit Narayan Singh's royal patronage reversed Tulsidas' egalitarian gestures and produced the second level of social hybridity; and the act of resituating the *Manas* text within folk genres such as *kajri* manifested the third level of artistic and socioeconomic hybridity. Through transformations such as these, *raja* Ishvariprasad Narayan Singh perpetuated and developed the hybridizing aesthetics of his predecessor, *raja* Udit Narayan Singh, and created regionally specific aesthetics and styles of artistic patronage that lasted almost a hundred years.

Birthing the Benares *Gharana*: The Patronage of Hybridity Creates Musical Identity

In the self-defining autobiography written by Deepakji and Prakashji, the Benares *gharana* was birthed 200 years ago: "With the heritage of 200 years old Banaras Gharana, their dedication, hard work (Riyaz) and excellent performing capability… added value to their Banaras Gharana constantly." Similarly, the text and genealogical charts that Adeshda evoked during our interviews suggested that the first member in the Benares *gharana*, Manohar Prasad, was born in 1794. This was the same year that the epileptic Benares *raja*, Mehip Narayan, signed an agreement that officially transferred governmental authority to the British East India Company; and it was also only a year prior to Udit Narayan Singh's ascendance to the Benares

[9] Lutgendorf's use of "*kajli*" and my use of "*kajri*" are different transliterations for the same genre of music.

throne. During the period in which political power in the city of Benares shifted to colonial control and freed *raja* Udit from administrative responsibility, the Mughal Empire in the capital city of Delhi was gradually declining. If the *raja*s of Benares and the *nawab*s of Awadh were the "richest Indian tributaries" in the nineteenth century (Wolpert 2009: 199), perhaps the musicians and vocalists in the dissolving courts of Delhi sought employment elsewhere: in 1835, "by the time of Ishwari Narayan Singh, musicians, both singers and instrumentalists, from other courts had begun to congregate in Ramnagar… [many of these musicians] came from Jaipur and Delhi" (Dalmia 1997: 81).[10]

As these performers began congregating in the royal courts of Benares, they likely encountered the regionally specific aesthetics of hybridity and modified their performance practices to acquire royal patronage. In this instance, musicians performing the Benares style of hybridity would have attempted to decrease the competition for patronage by consolidating their artistic production into distilled hereditary corporations and limiting the number of students who they were obliged to teach; this sociomusical distillation would have decreased future competition with current students and allowed focused lessons with their own offspring. Moreover, adopting the regionally specific aesthetics of hybridity would have also created a meaningful sociomusical identity for the newly mobile and potentially anonymous audience members. This historical interpretation situates the emergence of the Benares *gharana* in a regional climate of hybridity and explains the performance practices of present-day vocalists who describe themselves as members in the Benares *gharana*.

This regionally specific style of hybridity was enacted during Deepakji's musical juxtapositions: by extracting instrumental sounds and gestures from *sarangi* and *shehnai*, he

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[10] Ramnagar is one of the many names for the city of Benares.

created identifiable melodic passages that were situated within *khyal* performances. Similarly, when borrowing a composition from Amir Khan, Rajan and Sajan Mishra utilized flexible approaches from both *thumri* and *khyal* to inform their decisions on whether or not to modify the *raga*, *tala*, text, or formal structure. When Mohan Lal Mishra sang a *khyal* rendition, he juxtaposed musical structures from both *khyal* and *thumri* and also innovated novel musical structures that were neither *khyal* nor *thumri*. This style of hybridity was also expressed conceptually by authenticating the fundamental emotive aspects of *thumri* with terminology from the *Natyasastra*. Moreover, by imitating an instrument as neutral as *shehnai*, borrowing compositions from a vocalist with an ambiguous sociomusical identity, and justifying their *thumri* history through the *Natyasastra*, the Benares *gharana* vocalists reflect a strategic avoidance of sociopolitical controversies that might have arisen from their integrative approach. If their style was rooted in an attempt to obtain royal patronage then creating controversy would have likely diminished the economic value of their musical style. In this sense, the Benares *gharana* chose hybridity as a musical process to seek patronage and create a distinct stylistic identity rather than a musical statement to challenge the musicians who questioned their authenticity or a political gesture to challenge the status quo that marginalized *Mirasi* musicians.

5

Understanding Hybridity without Liberal Ideology

The Stylistic Identity of the Benares Gharana Affirms Hegemony

Two Paradigmatic Theories of Hybridity

There are two major paradigms for theorizing hybridity and liminality within the humanities and social sciences – or, more specifically, within postcolonial studies and ritual anthropology. The first theoretical paradigm emerged in 1969 from Turner's discussions on liminality, communitas, and the ritual process; the second theoretical paradigm materialized in the aftermath of postmodernity: Bhabha's theory of postcolonial hybridity in 1994. Although there are other approaches to the study of liminality and hybridity, these two theoretical frameworks perpetuate an essential assumption that tends to inform theories of cultural juxtapositions and creolizations: hybridity is subversive. Since both of these theories are situated (approximately) on either end of the 40-year history in which cultural hybridity has been used as a compelling analytical model, the assumption of counter-hegemony is evidently imbedded within the history of hybrid studies. This paradigm of subversion prevents an accurate understanding of the stylistic identity that defines the Benares *gharana*: musical hybridity affirms hegemony.

Liberal Ideology and Turnerian Liminality

Since a comprehensive discussion of Turnerian liminality, communitas, and ritual process extends beyond the limits of this chapter, I will only argue that the definitions and functions of liminality and communitas imply subversion. The fundamental conceptualization of liminality as

subversive and anti-structural prevents the possibility of understanding hybridities that are not discursive, hybridities that are in fact hegemonic and authoritative.

Turner (1969: 95) argues, "liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial." In this instance, "liminal entities" are presented as the binary opposites – or perhaps the complete destructors – of law, custom, and convention – in other words, hegemonic entities. Furthermore, the relationships and interactions that emerge within and between these liminal entities create an experience of communitas that depicts "society as an unstructured or rudimentarily structured and relatively undifferentiated *comitatus*, community, or even communion of equal individuals" (*ibid*.: 96). To create an overarching definition that frames the vast diversity of liminal phenomena and undifferentiated communities, Turner (*ibid*.: 125) suggests that "all have this common characteristic: they are persons or principles that (1) fall in the interstices of social structure, (2) are on its margins, or (3) occupy its lowest rungs." By defining liminality as marginal and low, Turner situates the status of being "betwixt and between" and the resultant experience of unstructured communitas as styles of being and styles of interrelating that are exclusive to the marginalized populations in the lowest classes of society. Not only do these styles of being and relating belong to subordinates but these marginal styles also antagonize the dominants (*ibid*.: 128): "Communitas breaks in through the interstices of structure, in liminality; at the edges of structure, in marginality; and from beneath structure, in inferiority… it transgresses or dissolves the norms that govern structured and institutionalized relationships…" Within this rhetoric, communitas "breaks", "transgresses", "dissolves", and ambushes from "beneath" those social experiences that are described as "structured" through the discursive tactics of liminality.

While my reading depicts liminality and communitas as political tools to undermine hierarchical structures, those familiar with Turnerian rituals of status reversal and status elevation should be quick to object that liminality and communitas can also affirm hierarchy and hegemony.[1] However, the power-affirming gestures that emerge from liminality in the rituals of status reversal and elevation are only created through reaggregation during the postliminal period. Although the end result of this liminality is status elevation and hierarchical reaffirmation, liminality in itself remains as transgressive and counter-hegemonic. In this sense, Turner's theories of liminality, communitas, and ritual process conceptualize the interstitial spaces of hybridity and the phenomena of in-betweenness through a liberal ideology of minority resistance.

Colonial Critiques Create Postcolonial Hybridity

Bhabhaian postcolonial hybridity emerges in the aftermath of postmodernity and nearly three decades after Turnerian liminality but it perpetuates the modernist foundation of liberal ideology that historically framed hybrid theories: hybridity, liminality, creolization, syncretism, interstitiality – or whatever else we decide to call it – is still conceptualized as a political gesture emerging from the margins of society. To thicken the description of liberal ideology as the historical predicate of hybrid theory, I will lead into my critique of Bhabha by briefly examining the postmodernization and postcolonization of anthropology and ethnography:

The critique of modernist anthropology as an extension and continuation of the imperial enterprise depicted the discipline as an embodiment of colonial ideology (Asad 1979: 607;

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[1] Turner (1969) describes the ritual process of status reversal and status elevation in Chapter 5: Humility and Hierarchy.

Jordan & Yeomans 1995: 391). This assertion emerged from historical analyses that described the development and evolution of ethnography within the colonial context (Asad 1973: 17):

> The colonial power structure made the object of anthropological study accessible and safe… It made possible the kind of human intimacy upon which anthropological fieldwork is based, but ensured that intimacy should be one-sided and provisional.

This critique of coevolution argued that anthropology was not synonymous with colonialism but rather, influenced by: the critical problem of contemporary anthropology has not been "its ideological service in the cause of imperialism, but its ideological conception of social structure and of culture" (Asad 1979: 624). These initial critiques of ideological influence were echoed through Said's (1985: 2-3) discussions of Orientalism: "Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the Orient' and (most of the time) 'the Occident.'" Through these structuralist distinctions he went on to describe "Orientalism as a Western style of dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient." The postmodern ethnography that evolved in response to these critiques of imperialism resulted in the canonic publications of *Writing Culture* (1986) and *Anthropology as Cultural Critique* (1986). Moreover, the liberal relativism that projected Said's critique of Orientalism helped define the subfield of postcolonial studies wherein Bhabha (1996: 58) reinterpreted Said's structuralist scholarship and developed his paradigmatic theory of hybridity:

> In my own work I have developed the concept of hybridity to describe the construction of cultural authority within conditions of political antagonism or inequity. Strategies of

> hybridization reveal an estranging movement in the 'authoritative'… At the point at which the precept attempts to objectify itself as a generalized knowledge or a normalizing hegemonic practice, the hybrid strategy or discourse opens up a space of negotiation where power is unequal but its articulation may be equivocal. Such negotiation is neither assimilation nor collaboration. It makes possible the emergence of an 'interstitial' agency that refuses the binary representation of social antagonism. Hybrid agencies find their voice in a dialectic that does not seek cultural supremacy or sovereignty. They deploy the partial culture from which they emerge to construct visions of community, and versions of historic memory, that give narrative form to the minority positions they occupy; the outside of the inside; the part of the whole.

Bhabha's "hybrid strategy" or "hybrid agency" articulates an attempt by the minority to create narrative meaning for marginalization. Although he suggests that these narratives emerge from an interstitial space that refuses the duality between the majority and the minority, he simultaneously argues that these spaces materialize when the precepts of the majority attempt to normalize. In other words, if Bhabha argues that the hybrid strategy emerges *when* the majority proceeds toward hegemony then, imperatively, the strategy of hybridity must be counter-hegemonic; or, if it is not *counter*-hegemonic and only *contemporary* to hegemony then, at the very least, hybridity cannot be nearly as bipartisan as he suggests: "an 'interstitial' agency that *refuses* the binary representation of social antagonism" [my italics].

In this interpretation, Bhabhaian postcolonial theory implies that hybridity is a political tactic employed by marginalized populations to challenge hegemonic authority; or, less provocatively, hybridity is a space that emerges "at the point at which" hegemony attempts

objectivity. In other words, the binary opposites that predicate Said's liberal deconstruction of Orientalism still exist within Bhabha's hybridity. In this instance, the binary opposites of postcolonial hybridity are presented as the hegemonic trajectory toward objectivity and the emerging space of hybridity. Although Bhabha does not escape the binary opposite, he does reconstruct the binary opposite within the temporal realm: Said employs nounal rhetoric – *the* Orient and *the* Occident – but Bhabha uses verbal rhetoric – "a normaliz*ing* hegemonic practice" and a hybridity that "*opens up* a space of negotiation".

Through these interpretations, I claim: although Bhabhaian postcolonial hybridity emerges nearly 30 years after Turnerian liminality and within the multivocality of postmodernity, it does not progress beyond the historical foundations of liberal ideology that lobby for hybridity as proletariat subversion.

Hegemonic Hybridity in the Stylistic Identity of the Benares *Gharana*

The Benares *gharana* creates hybridized identities by situating its musical style betwixt and between the dyadic framework of sociomusical activities in the nineteenth century.[2] This historical articulation of musical and social liminality is expressed through contemporary practices of instrumental imitation, compositional borrowing, genre integration, and terminological modification.[3] However, these musical expressions of interstitial identity are not articulated as subversive actions from the marginalized caste of *Mirasi* accompanists attempting undermine the dominant caste of *Kalawant* soloists; rather, musical hybridity performed by Benares *gharana* vocalists is an act of affirmation that conforms to the aesthetics of the *raja*s in

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[2] See Chapter 3 **Figure 3.13**

[3] See Chapter 3 **Fieldworking between Liminal Sounds and Performers in Calcutta**

nineteenth century Benares. This performance of aesthetic conformity emerged in the aftermath of the political and technological revolutions that accompanied British imperialism: musicians confronted the economic challenges of declining artistic patronage in the post-Mughal era by coalescing into *gharana* lineages and adapting to regionally specific aesthetics. Musicians in the region of Benares adapted to the hybridizing aesthetics of Udit Narayan Singh and Ishvariprasad Narayan Singh in order to obtain patronage.[4] Since the hybrid identity of the Benares *gharana* was created to affirm the aesthetics of endowed *raja*s, the theorization of hybridity or liminality as discursive or subversive does not explain the musical style of this *gharana*. In this instance, hybridity is not an attempt to undermine or challenge hegemony but instead it is a means of crafting an insular and cohesive identity for the citizens of Benares. This crafted identity can emerge as an organized sociopolitical entity to confront British imperialism.

Although the Benares *gharana* makes a Turnerian gesture by locating its musical style betwixt and between the dyadic framework, the resulting liminality actually supports sociopolitical structure while simultaneously defying sociomusical structure. For example, the Benares *gharana* vocalist, Pandit Mohan Lal Mishra, performs compositions that are neither *thumri* nor *khyal* and concurrently both *thumri* and *khyal*; however, this musical ambiguity supports the political structure that emanates from nineteenth century *raja*s who patronized genre hybridity. In this sense, the identity of the Benares *gharana* is musically ambiguous but politically definite. Given the political certainty of musical liminality, the stylistic identity of the Benares *gharana* never produces communitas: "society as an unstructured or rudimentarily structured and relatively undifferentiated *comitatus*, community, or even communion of equal individuals" (Turner 1969: 96); rather, their stylistic identity supports the *raja*'s aesthetics and

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[4] See Chapter 4 **Historicizing Identity through Patronization**

hierarchical status. Moreover, although the musical liminality of Benares *gharana* vocalists falls "in the interstices of social structure" this interstitiality does not situate their performances in the "margins" or the "lowest rungs" (*ibid*.: 125); instead, musical hybridity positions their performances in the courts of nineteenth century *raja*s. While Turner's depiction of liminality suggests the antagonistic transgression of social structure, the Benares *gharana* ultimately uses liminality to affirmatively support social structure and obtain patronage.

Bhabha (1996: 58) suggests, "Hybrid agencies find their voice in a dialectic that does not seek cultural supremacy or sovereignty." However, the *raja*s in nineteenth century Benares utilized their financial resources and political supremacy to patronize and perpetuate aesthetics of hybridity. Moreover, these hybrid aesthetics are not deployed from "the partial culture from which they emerge to construct visions of community, and versions of historic memory, that give narrative form to the minority positions they occupy." Rather, the hybrid agency of the Benares *raja* emerges from the individual finances of the dominant hegemon and imposes artistic conformity upon the minority. In this instance, the historical context that created the stylistic identity of the Benares *gharana* conflated or reversed the binary opposites of postcolonial hybridity (which I previously described as the hegemonic trajectory toward objectivity and the emerging space of hybridity). Hybridity, in nineteenth century Benares, is the "normalizing hegemonic practice" or the authoritative procession towards objectivity; singularity or purity, on the other hand, would have been the "strategy or discourse [that] open[ed] up a space of negotiation" for the marginalized voices to create narrative meaning. Although the theories developed by Bhabha and Turner explain subversive hybridities, the stylistic identity of the Benares *gharana* demands a theory of *hegemonic* hybridity.

To develop an understanding of the hybridity that emerged from the hegemony of nineteenth century Benares *raja*s, I suggest that this specific style of hegemonic hybridity is a methodology through which Udit Narayan Singh and Ishvariprasad Narayan Singh attempted to create an internally cohesive identity for Benares citizens that could arise as an organized sociopolitical entity to confront British imperialism. In the previous chapter, I showed that *raja* Udit ascended to the Benares throne only a year after the British East India Company officially took control of Benares. Within the emergent context of direct imperial control, *raja* Udit and *raja* Ishvariprasad were no longer preoccupied with the administrative responsibilities of their predecessors and they were free to conceptualize political agendas through artistic patronage. In this sense, the patronage of artistic hybridity crafted an internally cohesive identity by integrating Indian artistic traditions from a variety of socioeconomic castes.[5] For instance, patronizing syncretic modifications of the historically marginalized recitations of *Manas* and supporting the musical integration of *thumri* and *khyal* created a newly emerging style of hybridity that citizens throughout Benares could identify with. The collective identity that may have arisen through the widespread appreciation for hybrid art might have constructed a powerful sociopolitical force to confront British imperialism.

This illustration of collective appreciation for hegemonic hybridity may be misunderstood as communitas; the critical distinction is that Turnerian communitas creates unstructured social relationships whereas the Benares style of aesthetic collectivity descends

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[5] Although Udit Narayan Singh patronized artists who utilized British painting techniques, this instance of imperial hybridity is one example among numerous examples of explicitly Indian or "indigenous" artistic hybridizations. Moreover, the specific importance of paintings in the gift economy of British imperialists may explain this *one* instance of British hybridity (Eaton 2004).

from the hegemonic commandments dictated by the *raja* to affirm hierarchical structure through artistic liminality. Furthermore, the artistic hybridity patronized by *raja* Udit and *raja* Ishvariprasad is distinct from Bhabhaian postcolonical hybridty: in Bhabha's conceptualization, hybridity *itself* is the negotiating space that challenges British imperialism by *integrating* British imperialism; whereas the Benares style of hegemonic hybridity that I describe, is a creative process through which an *insular* collective identity that does *not* integrate British imperialism can emerge as an organized sociopolitical entity that may *later* challenge the binary opposite of imperialism. Another way of restating this is to say that my version of hegemonic hybridity is an antecedent that comes *before* the collective identity that challenges British imperialism whereas Bhabha's postcolonial hybridity *is* the challenge to British imperialism. In this sense, the stylistic identity of the Benares *gharana* embodies the process of hegemonic hybridity that was conceptualized in the nineteenth century to confront the outside influence of British imperialism.

Glossary

akar – Rapidly ascending melodic lines that is sung on the 'a' vowel, which levels out on a climatic pitch that is periodically revisited.
alap – Soloistic, unmetered and improvisatory introduction for a *khyal* or *thumri* performance
antara – Section in a *khyal* or *thumri* that is marked by new lyrics and higher pitches
bandish – Lyrical poem in a *khyal* or *thumri* composition
bandish thumri – Style of *thumri* that originated in Lucknow
bhai – Term used by *biradari* members to refer to one another as "brother"
bhav(a) – Terminology from *rasa* theory to describe sentiments
biradari – Social network for *Mirasi* musicians
bol banao thumri – Style of *thumri* that originated in Benares
chaiti – Genre of folk music
chaudhari – Head member of the *biradari*
dadra – Genre of folk music
dhrupad – Sixteenth century genre of high classical music
ekar – Same as *akar* except with 'e' vowel
ektal – Twelve beat rhythmic cycle
gamak – Vocal technique that resembles an exaggerated vibrato from Western classical music
gharana – Lineage of *Kalawant*s with a collective musical style that is distinct
ghazal – Genre of folk music
guru(ji) – Vocal teacher
hori – Genre of folk music
jhumra – Fourteen beat rhythmic cycle
kajri – Genre of folk music
Kalawant – Sociomusical caste for soloists in classical performances
kana – Vocal technique common in *thumri*, an abrupt turn on a note and a descending glide
Kathak – Style of North Indian classical dance that is closely connected with *thumri*
khali – Unaccepted beat in a *tala* cycle that counterbalances *sam*
khandan – Central hereditary lineage in a *gharana*
khatka – Quick and delicate melodic passage departing and returning to a specific scalar region
khyal – High classical genre of North Indian vocal music
laggi – Concluding section in a *thumri* performance where the *tabla* comes to the fore
madhya – Section in a *thumri* performance that is marked by new lyrics
Manas – Reinterpretation and translation of the *Ramayana* epic written in 16th century
Mirasi – Sociomusical caste for accompanists in classical performances
mir – Glissando
mukhra – Repeated refrain in *thumri* and *khyal*
murki – Rapid trill extending above and below a focal pitch
Natyasastra – Text that describes aesthetics and practices of dance and performing arts
nawab – Muslim ruler
nom-tom – Vocal technique from *dhrupad* that resembles a Sanskrit mantra
pakad – Set of motivic phrases for each *raga*
pakhawaj – Barrel drum that used to accompany courtesan *Kathak* dancers
panchayat – Council of leaders in a *biradari* that resolves conflicts
prabandha – Medieval genre of classical vocal music

pukar – Ascending passages that increases in volume before arriving on climatic pitches
qawwali – Genre of light classical music
raga – Melodic mode
raja – Hindu ruler
rasa – Concept from the *Natyasastra* that is translated as the essence of a performance
sadhus – Ascetic saint
sam – Accented beat at the beginning of the *tala*
samvadi – Second most important note in a *raga*
sarangi – Bowed chordophone that accompanies soloists
sargam – Similar to Western solfège
sarod – Fretless string instrument that is played with a plectrum.
shehnai – Double reed aerophone
sitar – Fretted string instrument played with finger pick
sruti – Tonic
sthayi – First metered and texted section of a *khyal* or *thumri*
swara – Notes
tabla – Set of paired membranophones that provide rhythmic accompaniment
tala – Rhythmic cycle
tali – Accent beats in *tala*
talim – Traditional teaching or training in classical music
tambura – Droning instrument
tan – Fast melodic figure
thumri – Genre of light classical vocal music
tintal – Sixteen beat rhythmic cycle
upaj – Improvisation
vadi – Most important note in a *raga*
veena – Stick zither that is one of the oldest North Indian instruments

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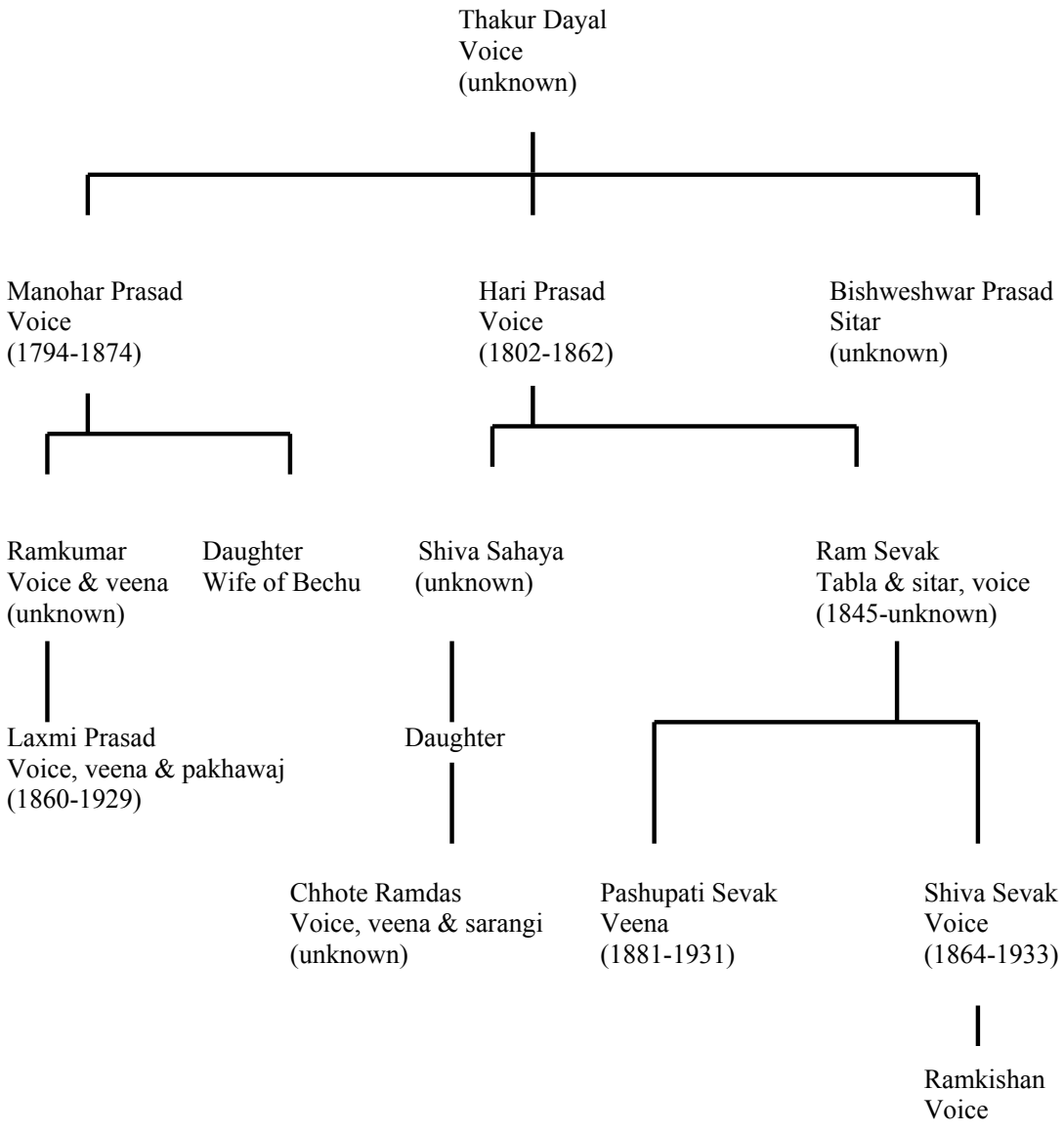
Appendix

Benares Lineages

Benares Lineage A



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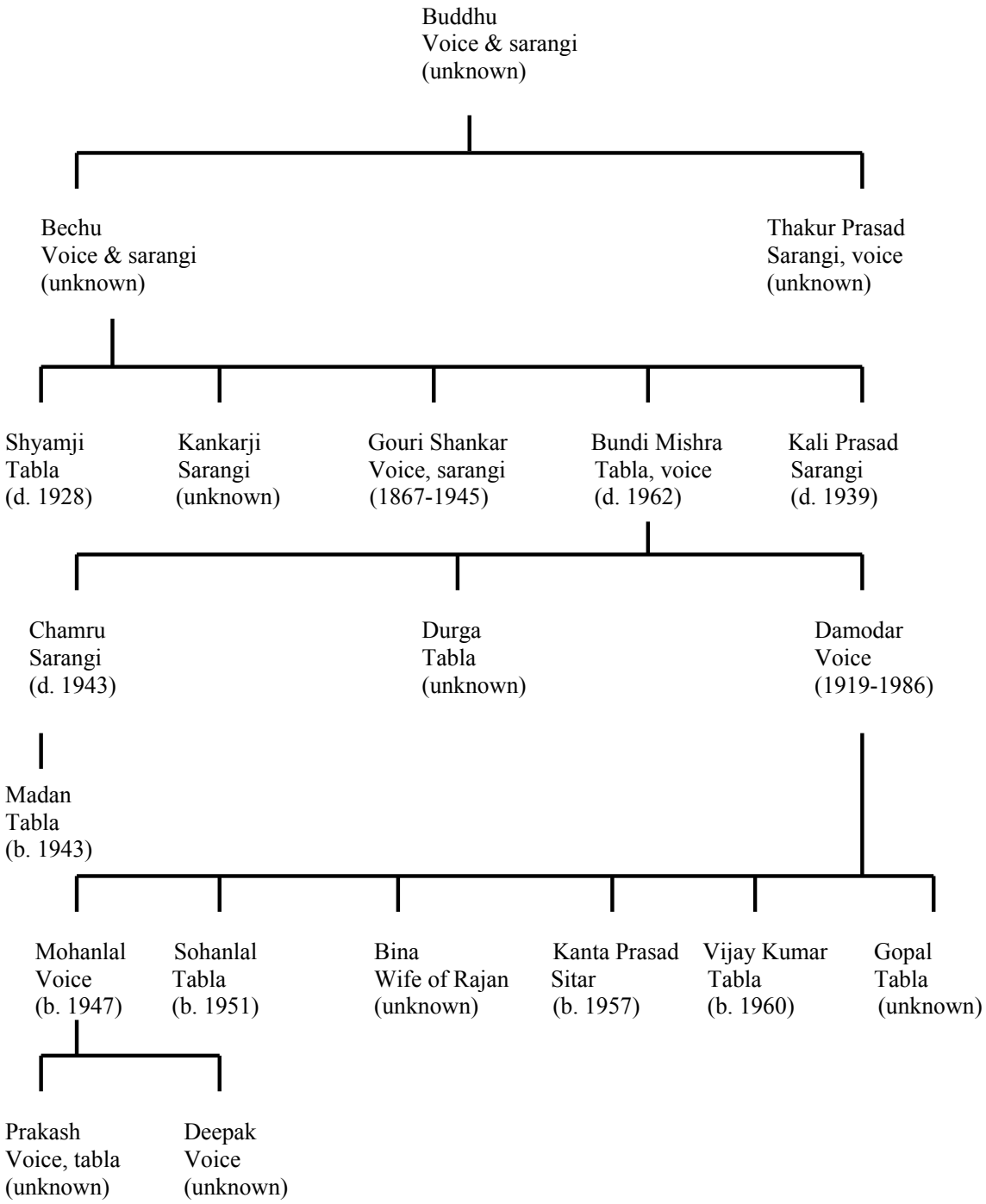

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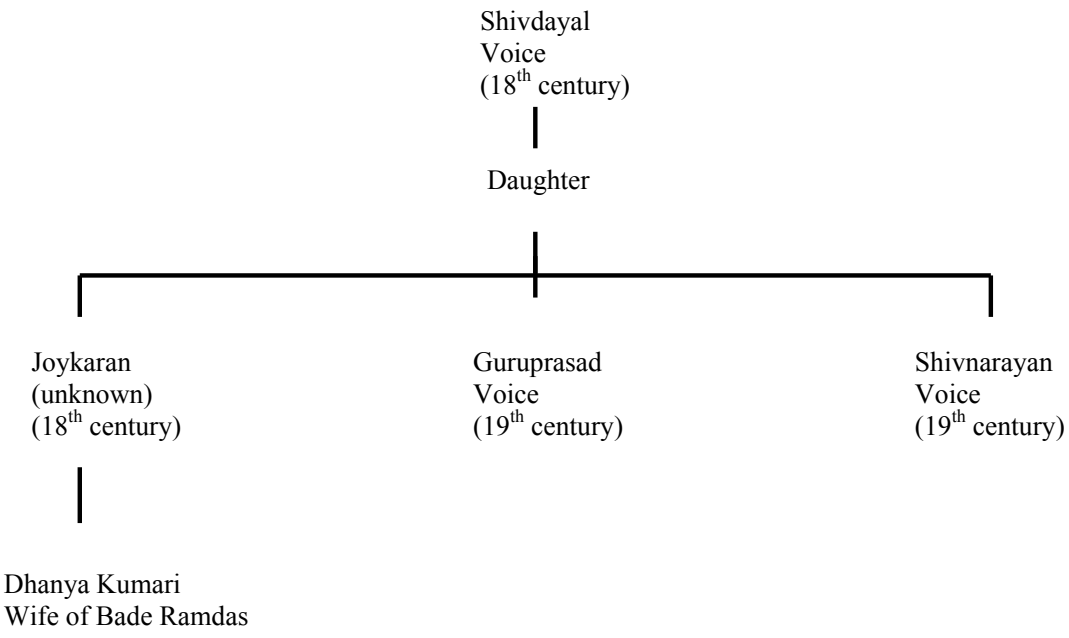

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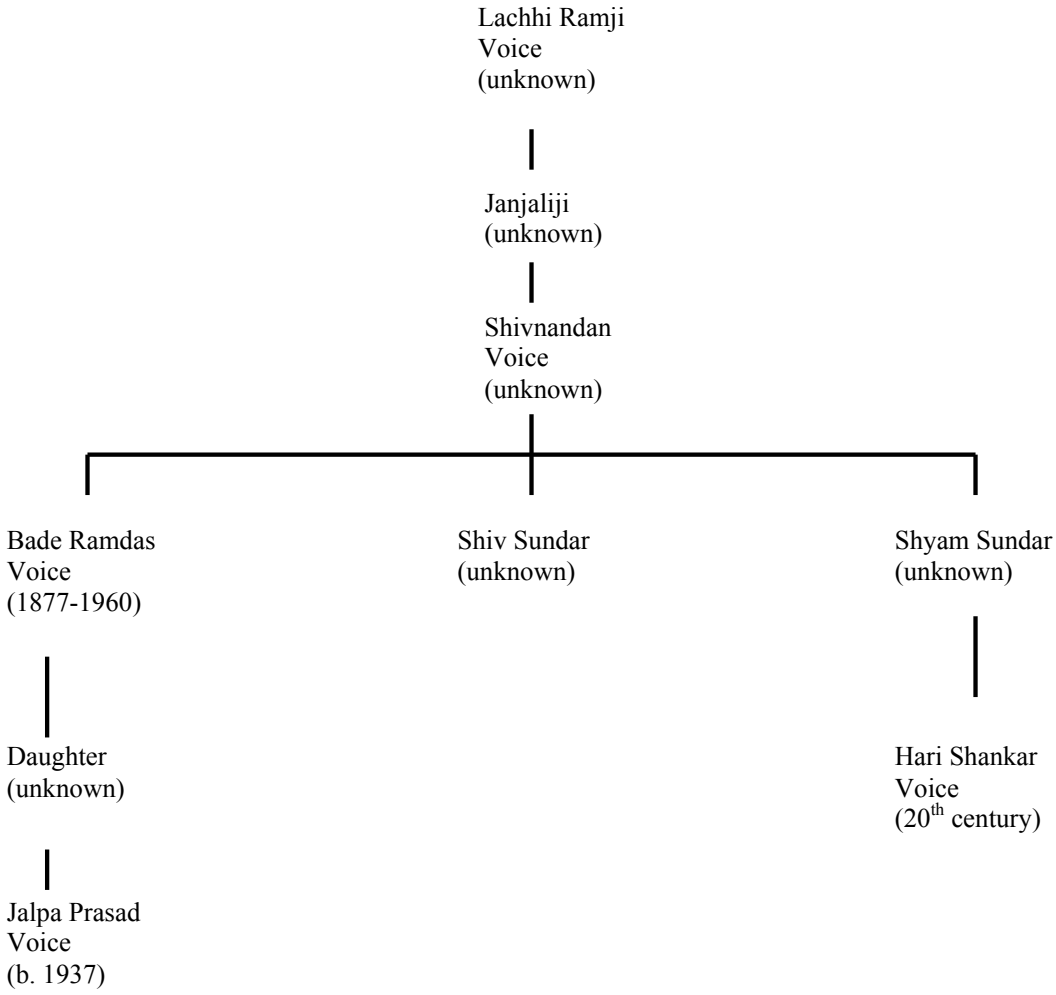

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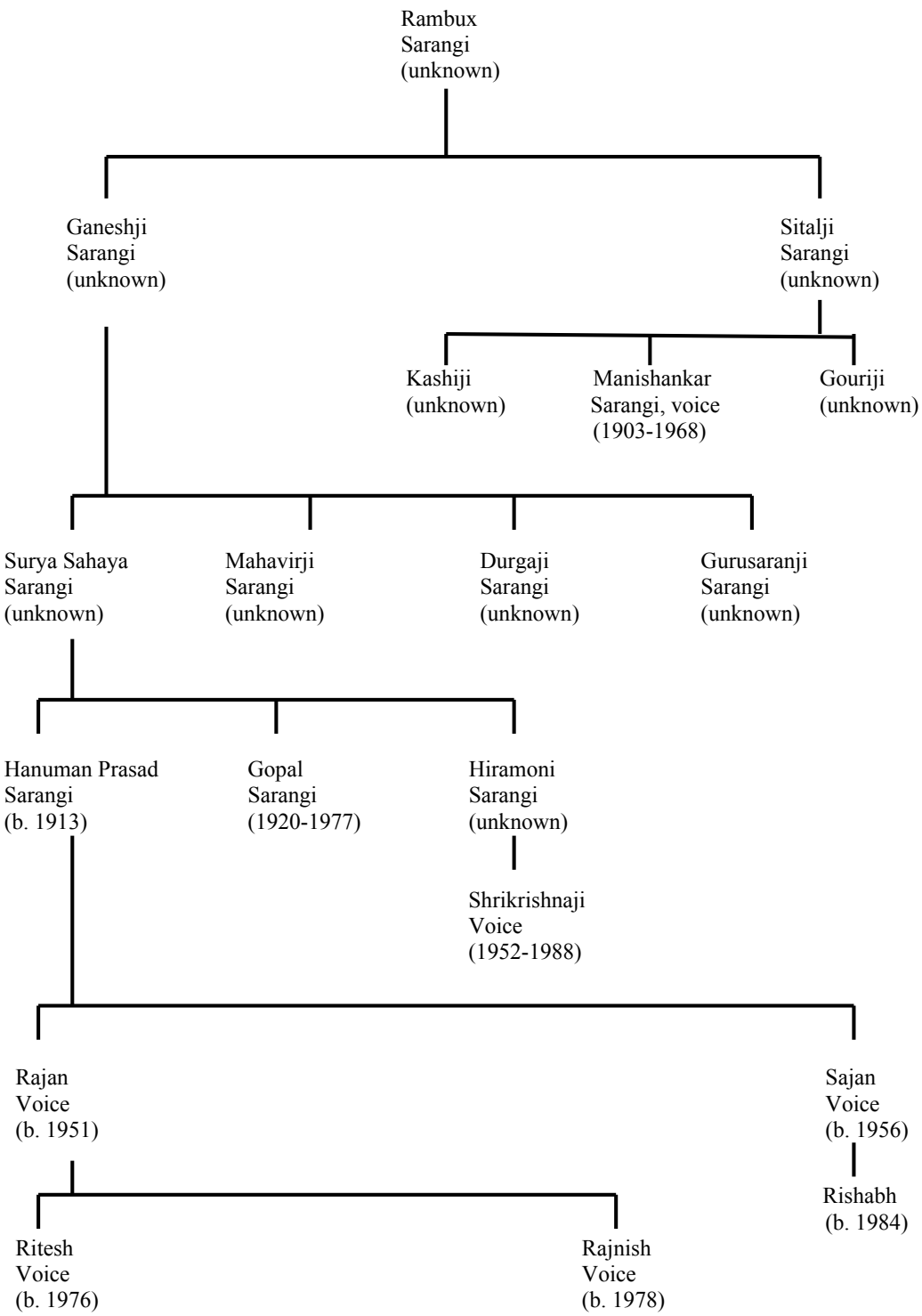

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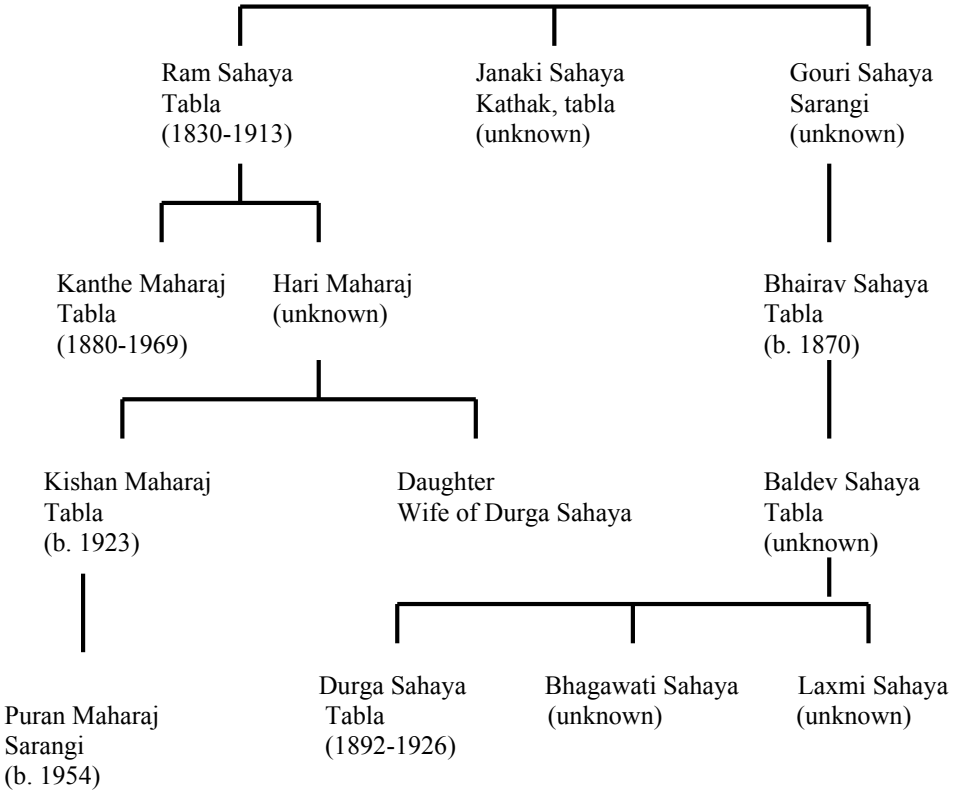

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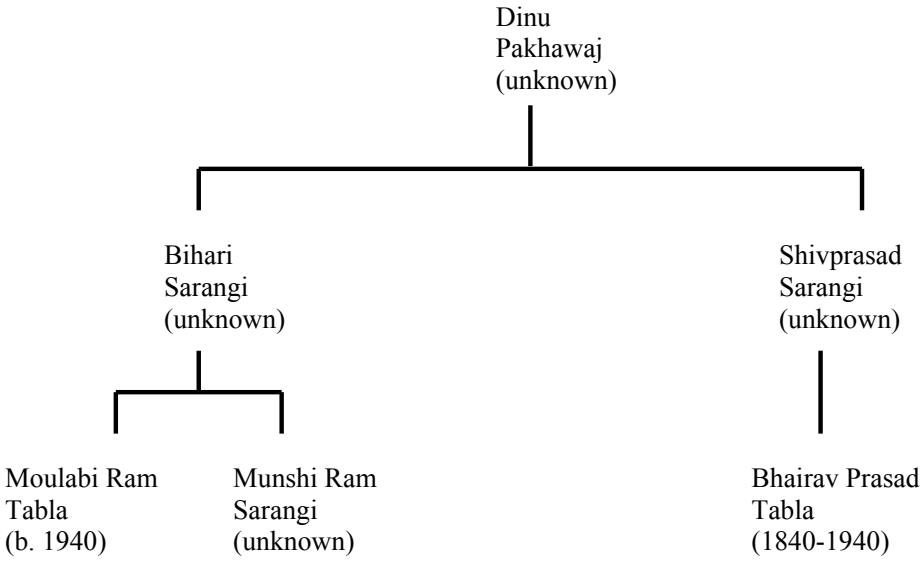

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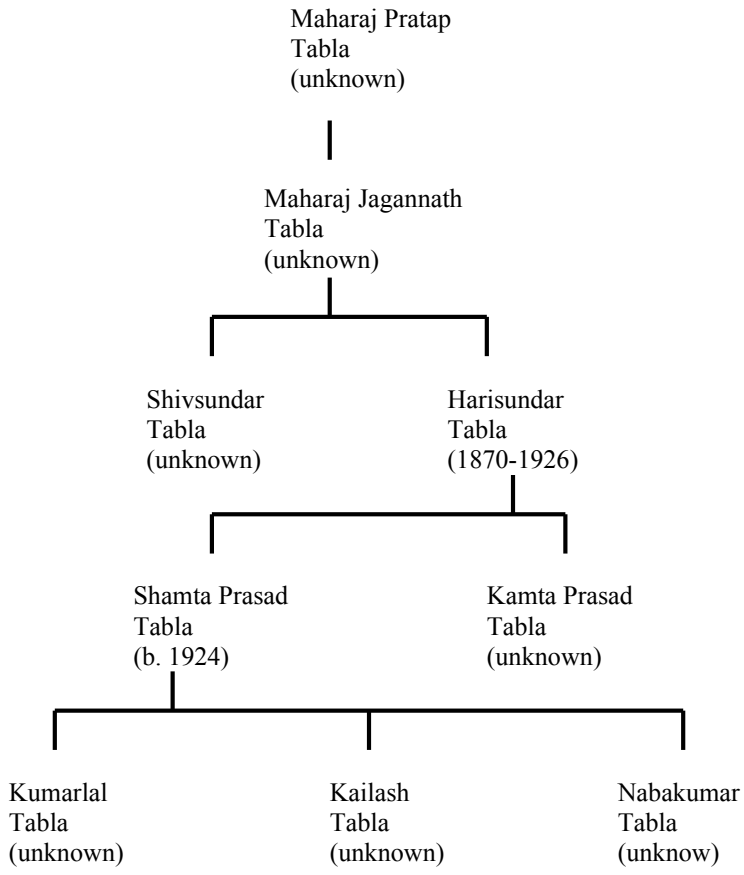

Benares Lineage I