

A **brief survey** of the development of *Vilambit* compositions on the *sitar* : the dominating influence of the *Masitkhani* style

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The instrumental compositions may be primarily divided into three basic categories on the basis of its tempo, i.e. *Vilambit*, *Madhya* and *Drut*. Of late we have opted two more subdivisions, one in *Vilambit* and one in *Drut* thus coming to five types of gross laya references, i.e.; *Ati-vilambit*, *Vilambit*, *Madhya*, *Drut*, and *Ati-drut*. For the last fifty years we have observed a highly commendable progress in *sitar* playing. The main three names responsible for this shoot up are Pt. Ravi Shankar, Ustd. Vilayet Khan and Pt. Nikhil Banerjee. There are some other names those have put in significant contributions during this period are Pt. Balaram Pathak and Ustd. Abdul Halim Zaffar Khan. Prior to this period we see the first major boost of this century from Ustd. Imdad Khan followed by Ustd. Enayet Khan. There had been other lesser known but highly commendable *sitar* players during this century, like Pashupatinath Mishra (Benaras), Lakshman Bhattacharya (Bengal), Wahid Khan (Etawa), Pannalal Bajpeyi (Gwalior), Bade Rahamat Khan (Dharwad), etc.

The *Masitkhani* style or *Delhi Baaj* of *sitar* playing was mainly popularized by Masitkhan's son Bahadur Khan followed by Rahim Senⁱ and his son the famous Amrt Sen. Amrt Sen's son Nihal Sen also became a reputed *sitar* player of his time. The first recorded audio reference of *Masitkhani gat* we find in Ustd. Barkatullah Khan'sⁱⁱ *Bhupali* disc. In those times the *vilambit gat*-s used to be played in near *Madhyalaya* of today. It is apparently the contribution of Ustd. Allauddin Khan to give another laya-dimension to *Vilambit gat*, namely *Ati-vilambit gat*-s. Pt. Nikhil Banerjee has many a time used to perform at a further slowed down tempo. His *Chandrakauns gat* (demo) may be a befitting example for *Ati-vilambit* tempo.

Back to *Maseetkhani gat*. The generally popular idea is *Masitkhani gat* has only one *bol* pattern that goes 5+3+5+3, i.e.

PATTERN : 1

Sthayee

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
											dr	d	dr	d	r
								0				3			
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
d	d	r	dr	d	dr	d	r	d	d	r					
X				2											

With this basic *bol* pattern we find many *gat*-s having a second line or **Manjha** as follows:
Manjha

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
											dr	d	dr	d	r
								0				3			
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
d	dr	d	r	d	dr	d	r	d	d	r					
X				2											

For **Antara** we find two approaches, one is starting from the 12th *matra* resembling the Sthayee *bol* and the other as we see frequently in Senia and Imdadkhani traditions are from the 4th *matra*:

The *bol* of **Antara** starting from the 4th *matra* is:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
			dr	d	dr	d	r	d	d	r	dr	d	dr	d	dr
X				2				0				3			
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
d	dr	d	r	d	dr	d	r	d	d	r					
X				2											

There had been a few other types of *gat*-s in the *Masitkhani* tradition. Here are some patterns:

PATTERN: 2

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
d	d	r	dr	d	dr	d	r	d	d	r					
X				2											
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
											dr	d	dr	d	r
								0				3			

This pattern has the same popular *bol* pattern but starts from *Sam* instead of 12th *matra* ⁱⁱⁱ.

PATTERN: 3

1 2 3 4	5 6 7 8	9 10 11 12	13 14 15 16
d dr d r	d dr d r	d d r dr	d dr d dr
X	2	0	3

The *bol* patterns of *sthayee* and *manjha* under *Pattern: 1* are generally attributed to Bahadur Khan, i.e. Masit Khan's son. *Pattern:3* is attributed to *Rahim Sen*.

PATTERN: 4

Here is one *bol* pattern of a two cycle *gat* starting from the 7th *matra*:

1 2 3 4	5 6 7 8	9 10 11 12	13 14 15 16
	d dr	d d r dr	d dr d r
X	2	0	3
1 2 3 4	5 6 7 8	9 10 11 12	13 14 15 16
d d r d	d r d dr	d d r dr	d dr d r
X	2		
1 2 3 4	5 6 7 8	9 10 11 12	13 14 15 16
d d r d	d r		
X	2		

PATTERN : 5

We see examples of use of *tala-s* other than *Teentala* for instrumental compositions since century back. We can find the following *gat* mentioned as a composition of Bahadur Khan^{iv} that is set to *Ektala*:

The *gat*

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
NS	DD	S	R	G	G	G	RR	G	DD	P	P
·	· ·										
d	dr	d	r	d	d	r	dr	d	dr	d	r
3		4		X		0		2		0	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
G	NN	N	S	G	G	G	PP	G	MM	G	R
	· ·	·									
d	dr	d	r	d	d	r	dr	d	dr	d	r
3		4		X		0		2		0	

So, we have gat-s under the *Masitkhani* tradition as follows:

1. Gats from 12th *matra*
2. Gats from Sam
3. Gats from other *matra*-s, e.g. 15th, 7th. etc.
4. Additional ornamentation and dropping the speed and adding *bol*-s in the basic format.
5. Taking the base frame but in other *tala*-s^v, e.g. Ektala, Jhaptala, etc.

There had been some later experimentation with *vilambit gats* where the presence of the basic structure of *Masitkhani* style is quite prominent. There we find different mukhda-s and the format in different *tala*-s^{vi}.

Notes:

ⁱ Rahim Sen (from *Rajasthan*) was the first in the *Senia* tradition to play *sitar*. Rahim Sen married to Dulha Khan's (Masitkhan's sister's son) daughter. He learnt *sitar* under his father in law. He was appointed as the teacher of the Nawab of Jhajjar's. Jhajjar was about 40 kms. west of Delhi.

ⁱⁱ Barkatullah Khan was a disciple of Ameer Khan who was the great grand son of Dulha Khan.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ustd. Md. Ameer Khan's (Shajehanpur) *gat* in *Pilu Jangla* takes to this bol pattern.

^{iv} Khan, Sadiq Ali. 1884. *sarmAyA-e-eSrat*, Delhi

^v Late Pt. Bimal Mukherjee mentioned to me about different *matra gat*-s of *Masitkhani* traditions in a personal communication. Because of Amrt Sen being one the most important instruments for the popularity of the *Masitkhani* style, he used to attribute *Masitkhani* style with Jaipur as Amrt Sen relates himself to Jaipur *Senia*-s.

^{vi} Bandopadhyay, Sanjoy. 1999. *vilambit gat in Marwa in Jhaptal*. RPG-HMV STCS 851203

References:

1. Actual music training from my father Pt. Peeyush Prasanna Bandopadhyay.
2. Actual music training from Pt. Radhika Mohan Maitra
3. Actual music training from Pt. Bimalendu Mukherjee
4. Discussion with Pt. Nikhil Banerjee and his *Chandrakauns* performance with tabla accompaniment of Pt. Shyamal Bose : AIR, Calcutta broadcast in 1977.
5. Nikhil Banerjee's performance of *Rageshree* : a tribute to his teacher Pt. Radhika Mohan Maitra. On this evening Pt. Maitra announced his retirement from professional arena: 1976.
6. Personal communications with Pt. Bimal Mukherjee
7. Miner, Allyn. 1997. *Sitar and Sarod in the 18th and 19th Centuries.*: Motilal Banarasidass, Delhi