

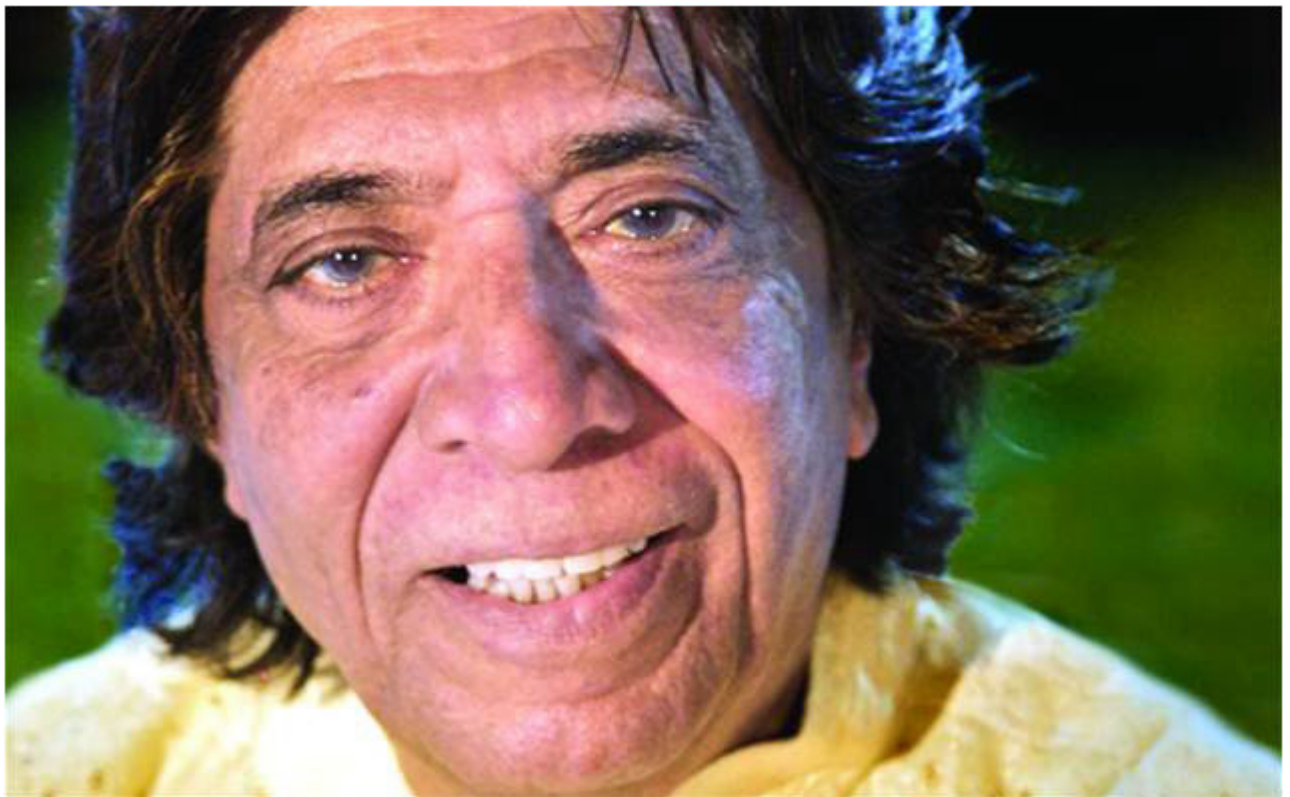
By Ally Adnan



In the first part of this intimate personal history, **Ally Adnan** describes meeting Ustad Fateh Ali Khan as an awkward teenager at Lahore's radio station in the 1980s. He also reproduces here, as it was told to him by the great ustad himself, the chronicle of struggles and fortunes that is the Patiala Gharana's legacy

The true ustad - part I

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I first met *Ustad* Fateh Ali Khan in the early 1980s. The meeting took place in the canteen of the radio station in Lahore.

This was a few hours after I had met classical vocalist Riaz Ali Khan of the *Sham Chaurasi* duo Imtiaz Ali - Riaz Ali. Things had not gone well with Riaz Ali. Lahore Radio had asked me to participate in a weekly program featuring talented Pakistani youth. I had been invited because of my academic credentials, which were good, but I was more interested in demonstrating my tabla-playing skills, which were not so good. The program's producer, the avuncular Sufi Saab (everyone referred to him as Sufi Saab and I'm pretty sure that very few, if any, knew his real name), had decided to indulge me and arranged for Riaz Ali to play *naghma* (musical refrain) with my tabla solo. I had practiced for weeks for the recording and

felt that I was ready for my first solo performance. During rehearsal, Riaz Ali started a wonderful *naghma* in *raag Chandarkauns* but stopped abruptly after accompanying me for a few cycles. " *Munday da tabla poora naeen ae,*" ('The boy's tabla is not good') he told Sufi Saab. He did not like my tabla and got up and left the room. The program was recorded without my solo. I believe I spoke about academics, my interests and plans for the future. Riaz Ali's behavior, while understandable, had left me heartbroken.

Ali Bakhsh and Fateh Ali went to learn khayal gayaki from Miyan Taan Ras Khan, the court musician of the last Mughal emperor

After the program I headed to the canteen to drown my sorrows in very strong *doodh-patti*. (Harder drinks were not sold at that canteen.) Ustad Fateh Ali Khan was in the canteen with his retinue of family members, fans and musicians. This was a setting Ustad Fateh Ali Khan loved. Surrounded by music lovers and musicians, he enjoyed talking, using his tremendous storytelling skills together with mimicry and song to keep his audience engaged. I joined today's group and listened with rapt attention as the great Ustad discussed the differences between *Jaunpuri*, *Darbari*, *Adana* and *Aasawari*. A few hours later, the group began to disperse at the call of the *aazaan* and I got a chance to introduce myself to Ustad Ji. The great maestro was kind and warm. I told him about the incident with Riaz Ali. He did not comment but asked one of his relatives to get a harmonium and tabla. " *Beta, kya baja rahe thay Riaz ke saath?*" ('Son, what were you playing with Riaz?') he asked me.

" *Teentaal*," I replied. (*Teentaal* is a rhythmic cycle of sixteen beats). "I do not know anything else yet."

He asked me to start playing as he recited the *theka* (basic strokes that define a rhythmic cycle):

Dha Dhin Dhin Dha
Dha Dhin Dhin Dha
Dha Tin Tin Ta
Ta Dhin Dhin Dha



Ally Adnan listens to Ustad Fateh Ali Khan at the latter's home in Islamabad

Helping me with the gestures of his hands to show *sam* (the first beat of a rhythmic cycle), *taali* (beat with stress) and *khaali* (beat with a

The ustad used his storytelling skills together with mimicry and song to keep his audience engaged

negation of stress), he had me in good tempo in a matter of minutes. Once he was satisfied that I had *Teentaal* under control, Ustad Ji started singing his famous *bandish* (text of musical composition) of *raag Jaunpuri, Mori Lagan Laagi*, to my accompaniment. My friend, Hamid Mahmood, who had driven me to the radio station on his motorbike, wasted no time and started recording the song on the little dictaphone I used to carry around for interviews. A few minutes later, Ustad Ji stopped singing. "*Jao aur yeh recording Riaz ko sunao*," ('Go and play this recording for Riaz') he said. "*Aur kaho ke ek Ustad aur gavaiyay ka farq daikhay*." ('And tell him to see the difference between a maestro and a mere vocalist.')

Ustad Ji wasn't finished. He started reciting the *theka* for *Ektala* (a rhythmic cycle of twelve beats) a few minutes later:

Dhin Dhin
DhaGe TiRaKiTa
Tu Na
Kat Ta
DhaGe TiRaKiTa
Dhin Na

and motioned for me to start playing. Soon I was accompanying him to his famous *bandish* (also recorded as a film duet with Zahida Parveen) *Nain So Nain Milaye Rakhnay Ko* in *raag Darbari*. This was followed by *Lagan Laagi* in *raag Shahana* set to *Jhaptaal* (a rhythmic cycle of ten beats):

Dhin Na
Dhin Dhin Na
Tin Na
Dhin Dhin Na

What an afternoon!

In a matter of a few hours, Ustad Fateh Ali Khan had managed to get me to play not just *Teentaal* but also *Ektala* and *Jhaptaal*.

Ali Bakhsh became the subject of ridicule in Patiala because of his dubious paternity

I had listened to music with love, attention and seriousness all my life, but until that day I hadn't known the true meaning of the word *ustad*. I had always

Miyan Kaloo was surprised to see the maharaja's mistress at his doorstep

associated the word with knowledge, expertise and dexterity. I had been wrong. An Ustad spreads love, warmth and happiness, using his gift for the pleasure and enlightenment of listeners. He does not need to teach formally; any interaction with an ustad is an education in itself. And more than anything else, an ustad makes those around him feel secure, worthy and special. It is on this basis that I have evaluated all musicians since. Those who fall short are merely gavaiyas (vocalists) and not ustad.

Ustad Fateh Ali Khan is today the greatest living ustad of vocal music in South Asia and one of the very few who can trace his ancestry directly to the founders of a major school of music: the Patiala Gharana or house of music.

The Patiala Gharana is one of the most prominent gharanas of vocal classical music. The foundations of the gharana were laid by Miyan Kaloo Khan who was the son of Ustad Dittay Khan and the grandson of Ustad Jassay Khan. Miyan Kaloo studied music initially with his father. He then went on to study *dhrupad gaiyiki* (the oldest genre of Indian classical vocal music that originated from devotional chants) from Ustad Behram Khan Dagar of Jaipur and *khayal gaiyiki* (a more recent "improvisational" form of Indian classical music whose origins are popularly ascribed to Amir Khusraw of Delhi) from Miyan Taan Ras Khan, the court musician of the last Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar. Miyan Kaloo Khan's disciples, son 'Jarnail' Ali Bakhsh Khan (1850-1920) and nephew 'Karnail' Fateh Ali Khan (1850-1909) founded the Patiala Gharana.



"The story of Patiala is long and interesting," says Ustad Fateh Ali Khan. "And one that needs to be documented correctly, once and for all. There is far too much disinformation out there."

After twenty years of education in music, Aliya-Fattu founded the Patiala Gharana

The story starts with a musical conference that was held in the court of the maharaja of Patiala towards the end of the 18th century. The maharaja was in love with a courtesan called Gokhi Bai who lived in his palace as an honorary maharani. Gokhi Bai had refused to convert to Sikhism and the maharaja was unable to

become a Muslim; a marriage had, therefore, not been possible. Gokhi Bai lived as the maharaja's mistress in the palace, in great luxury and comfort. She was credited with introducing *khayal gaiyki* to the maharaja's court. The maharaja's son had no love for music and a great hatred for Gokhi Bai. The honorary maharani found his feelings towards her disconcerting and remained in a continuous state of uncertainty about her future after the maharaja, who was much older than her. She was an unhappy woman.

Miyan Kaloo Khan was invited to sing at the end of the conference. He sang Bilaskhani Todi, a *raag* invented by Taan Sen's son, Bilas Khan, conjuring up the image of *Todi* using the notes of *Bhairavi*. This was a performance that would be remembered by the music aficionados of Patiala for decades. Gokhi Bai was enchanted by Miyan Kaloo's music. She could not get him, or his music, out of her mind and felt that she would have a better future with the great musician than with the maharaja. The following evening, Gokhi Bai left the palace, dressed as a maidservant, and headed straight to Miyan Kaloo's place of residence. Once there, she knocked vigorously on the door, waking up Miyan Kaloo who was both frightened and surprised to see the maharaja's mistress at his doorstep.

"I am in love with you, Kaloo," Gokhi Bai is supposed to have told Miyan Kaloo. "I can no longer imagine a life without you. Indeed I don't have a life without you anymore. If I return to the palace after spending time with you in your home, I will surely be killed. My life is now in your hands." Miyan Kaloo knew the maharaja well enough to know that he had no choice either. Once the maharaja found out that his mistress had spent time with the musician in the middle of the night, he too would be killed. Bewildered and scared, Miyan Kaloo left Patiala with Gokhi Bai that very night, leaving sons Ali Bakhsh Khan and Nabi Bakhsh Khan and his wife behind in Patiala. Miyan Kaloo and Gokhi Bai headed to Gwalior where the songstress knew many musicians and music-lovers.



The old Patiala palace

After Miyan Kaloo's sudden departure from Patiala, Ali Bakhsh Khan and Nabi Bakhsh Khan were adopted by their maternal uncle. The two brothers believed that their uncle was their real father. Nabi Bakhsh Khan died at a young age. This created a void in Ali Bakhsh Khan's life that was filled by his cousin and lifelong friend Fateh Ali Khan. The two of them were initiated into music by the uncle who trained them for about eleven years. In his teens, Ali Bakhsh Khan found out that he had been raised by his uncle and not his real father. He became the subject of ridicule in Patiala because of his dubious paternity. Heartbroken and saddened by accusations of being a bastard, he convinced his uncle to take him to Gwalior to see his real father. Fateh Ali Khan decided to accompany him on the trip. The cousins could never be separated.

In the fifteen years that had passed since Miyan Kaloo left Patiala, Gokhi Bai had given birth

to a son called Abdullah Khan. Miyan Kaloo took a great interest in teaching music to his son who showed great promise. When Ali Bakhsh Khan showed up at his father's doorstep, Abdullah Khan was not happy. He did not want to share his father's love and attention with anyone else. He asked his father not to teach Ali Bakhsh Khan, warning him that he would give up music if Miyan Kaloo started teaching his stepbrother. The days that followed were full of emotion and tension. Miyan Kaloo was torn between his love of Abdullah Khan and his feelings for Ali Bakhsh Khan; he did not want all the effort that he had put into training Abdullah to go to waste and he did not want to disown Ali Bakhsh Khan a second time. Gokhi Bai was visiting her family in Ambala at the time. She was unable to provide Miyan Kaloo the support and counsel he needed and had come to expect from his wife. The situation caused a lot of grief to Ali Bakhsh Khan. A few days later, he had a huge fight with his father and left Gwalior sad and angry. When Gokhi Bai returned to Gwalior, she was not happy about all that had transpired in her absence. She admonished her son for being jealous and narrow-minded and told Miyan Kaloo to make amends with the son he had abandoned as a child and whom he had failed to welcome properly after a period of fifteen years. Gokhi Bai sent messengers to Ali Bakhsh Khan to convey apologies on the family's behalf, urging them to come back to Gwalior and promising both love and musical instruction. A few weeks later, Ali Bakhsh Khan returned to Gwalior, together with Fateh Ali Khan, and started training with his father. The talents of Ali Bakhsh and Fateh Ali Khan eclipsed the abilities of Abdullah Khan. After a few years of training, Miyan Kaloo took the two musicians to Ustad Behram Khan, the famous *dhrupad* singer of the Dagar tradition, and the court musician of Maharaj Ram Singh of Jaipur. Once the duo had completed their training with Ustad Behram Khan, Miyan Kaloo asked Ustads Haddu and Hassu Khan, the celebrated grandsons of Ustad Nathan Pir Bakhsh, to take Ali Bakhsh Khan and Fateh Ali Khan under their tutelage. Miyan Kaloo was not yet satisfied with the education of his brightest students. He wanted them to learn *khayal*, cognizant of the fact that *dhrupad* was in decline. *Ustad* Mubarak Ali Khan of Rewa was the most well-known *khayal* singer of the time. At the direction of Miyan Kaloo, Ali Bakhsh and Fateh Ali Khan became *Ustad* Mubarak Ali Khan's students and started learning *khayal*. Years of rigorous training followed, resulting in both fame and fortune for the duo, who came to be known as *Aliya-Fattu*.

A few years later, the well-known Mughal court musician Miyan Taan Ras Khan decided to hold his own *barsi* (death anniversary) during his lifetime. *Barsis* used to be grand musical events at the time. Miyan Taan Ras Khan wanted to enjoy the music that would be sung at his *barsi* himself. He did not want death to take away the opportunity of attending his own *barsi* away from him. *Aliya-Fattu* traveled to Delhi to participate in the event together with Miyan Kaloo Khan and Ustads Haddu and Hassu Khan. The duo's performance at the *barsi* was memorable and overshadowed all other musicians. Miyan Kaloo knew that the two had learnt all that they could from Ustads Haddu and Hassu Khan and from *Ustad* Mubarak Ali Khan. He wanted them to become the students of Miyan Taan Ras Khan. It was with great tact and diplomacy that he secured Haddu and Hassu Khan's permission to make *Aliya-Fattu* the students of Taan Ras Khan. The next morning, Miyan Kaloo took the two young musicians with him to Miyan Taan Ras Khan's home and found him resting on the silver bed that

Bahadur Shah Zafar had presented to his principal court musician. Ali Bakhsh Khan and Fateh Ali Khan touched Taan Ras Khan's feet and begged him to sing for them. The *Ustad* asked Ali Bakhsh and Fateh Ali Khan to play his tanpuras - named *Sawan* and *Bhadon* after the two seasons - as he started singing the *raag Puriya*. This was in the morning but Taan Ras Khan's rendition of the evening *raag* was so powerful that daylight seemed to disappear while he was singing. The duo became convinced that Taan Ras Khan was an *ustad* whose knowledge greatly exceeded their own and became his students. In the years that followed, Miyan Taan Ras Khan shared what some claim were more than five thousand (5,000) of his own *bandishes* with the two musicians. The training with Miyan Taan Ras Khan polished the already considerable art of the duo to the extent that they came to be regarded as the greatest musicians of North India. *Aliya-Fattu's* fame spread far and wide. They started performing in palaces and in courts all over the country. No major musical event was considered complete without their participation and having the duo sing in their palaces became a symbol of prestige for *nawabs* and *maharajas*.

After twenty long years of education in music, *Aliya-Fattu* founded the Patiala Gharana of music, combining the best of what they had learnt from the Gwalior, Jaipur, Delhi and Rewa *gharanas* with their own ingenuity and genius. Their style of singing appealed to a large variety of listeners. It possessed the *aalaap* (opening section of a music piece sung without rhythm) and *silsila-war barhat* (systematic progression) of *Ustads* Haddu and Hassu Khan; the *tezi* (speed) and *taankari* (complexity of flights) of *Ustad* Mubarak Ali Khan; the *sahih-khawani* (accurate singing) of *raags* of *Ustad* Behram Khan; and the *layakari* (rhythmic virtuosity) and *vilambit gaiyki* (singing in slow tempo) of Miyan Taan Ras Khan.

Aliya-Fattu finally settled in Patiala where they became court musicians of Maharaja Rajendara Singh. They left the state when the maharaja died. *Jarnail* Ali Bakhsh Khan went to the village of Tonk where he became a court musician for the *nawab*. The *nawab* was a lover of music and a connoisseur who gave Ali Bakhsh Khan and Fateh Ali Khan the titles of *Jarnail* (General) and *Karnail* (Colonel), respectively. *Karnail* Fateh Ali Khan moved to Kashmir and became the court musician of Maharaja Pratap Singh. *Jarnail* Ali Bakhsh Khan returned to Patiala during the reign of Maharaja Bhupinder Singh and lived there until his death.

Ustad Fateh Ali Khan sings Raag Bahar

Ustad Fateh Ali Khan sings Raag Desi

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Comments (10 comments)

What a deep understanding of music history, excellent and great work.

Posted: Tuesday, October 01, 2013 by Shakeel Ahmed from Philadelphia PA

It was a such an interesting read

Posted: Tuesday, March 26, 2013 by Kami Syed from Taxila

Absolutely engrossing... such a treat for people who are fans of the Gharana and its great artists!

Posted: Friday, March 15, 2013 by Ashu from Abu Dhabi

Wow #Amazing # Superb # Great work done by Ally Adnan sir. What a brilliant way to potrait a Legend !!!

Posted: Thursday, March 14, 2013 by Harpreet Singh from England

This is beautifully written. It is fitting for such a great Ustad to be heralded in such a profound and enlightening manner. Thank you for this.

Posted: Tuesday, March 12, 2013 by Vijai from Canada

This is a phenomenal piece. In depth, personal, and candid - really enjoyed this article. It's a true treasure...

Posted: Saturday, March 09, 2013 by Arif Mahmood from Dallas

Heart touching story....If I was a movie producer I would have made a film about this.

Posted: Saturday, March 09, 2013 by Siawash from London

you took me in that time that is quality of good writer

Posted: Friday, March 08, 2013 by Hassan Rana from Pakistan

Excellent write , a great detailed story of Patialia Gharana and your interest on Classical Music. Worth sharing. Looking forward for more similar write ups.

Posted: Friday, March 08, 2013 by Imtiaz Alam from Pakistan

indeed great piece of article.certainly you had given alot of time and hard work for sharing this with us. SUPERFINE

Posted: Friday, March 08, 2013 by jawad from melbourne

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Jarnail Ali Bakhsh Khan had one son, *Ustad* Akhtar Hussain Khan (1900-1972), who stayed in Patiala until 1947, when he moved to Lahore. He had three (3) sons - *Ustad* Amanat Ali Khan (1931-1974), *Ustad* Fateh Ali Khan (1933-) and Hamid Ali Khan (1953-), all of whom became celebrated singers in Pakistan. *Karnail* Fateh Ali Khan had one son, *Ustad* Ashiq Ali Khan (1890-1949), who did not marry and remained issueless.

"People twist history to serve their own purposes," laments *Ustad* Fateh Ali Khan.

" *Ustad* Bade Ghulam Ali Khan's family has spread a lot of incorrect information about the history of the Patiala *gharana* in recent years.

"Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali Khan's family has spread a lot of incorrect information about the history of the Patiala gharana"

" *Ustad* Bade Ghulam Ali Khan was one of the greatest singers of all time and a student of the Patiala *gharana*. His father, Ali Bakhsh Qasur-Wale and his uncle Meeran Bakhsh (also known as Kaalay Khan) were students of *Karnail* Fateh Ali Khan. Bade Ghulam Ali Khan learnt first from his uncle and subsequently from his father. In 1932, he became a *ganda-bandh shagird* (formal student) of *Ustad* Akhtar Hussain Khan and *Ustad* Ashiq Ali Khan at a grand ceremony held in *Takaiya Meerasiyan* in Lahore. He was an honest man and a great artist. He knew how to show proper respect to his *Ustads* and his *Ustad Khana* (family of his teachers). He never forgot to give us *nazar* (monetary offering made to senior musicians and teachers) whenever we performed in his presence, even though he was our senior. He understood the benefits of honesty and the power of blessings. Look at the rewards he reaped. Few singers have experienced the level of renown and adulation that came his way. He deserved it. Once he died, his scions tried to distance themselves from the Patiala *gharana*, claiming that he was a member of the Qasur-Patiala *gharana*. There is *nogharana* called the Qasur-Patiala *gharana* and, even if there was, *Ustad* Bade Ghulam Ali Khan did not belong to it. He never once used the words Qasur-Patiala in his life. His son, Munawwar Ali Khan, started the whole Qasur-Patiala controversy, denying that his father ever became a student of *Ustad* Akhtar Hussain Khan and *Ustad* Ashiq Ali Khan even though dozens of witnesses remember the 1932 event. And what was the result? God punished him for his dishonesty by making his music devoid of soul and feeling. Raza Ali Khan, the grandson of *Ustad* Bade Ghulam Ali Khan, went a few steps further and made claims related to Qasur-Patiala that had nothing to do with the truth. And look at his singing today? No knowledge, no beauty and no soul. Music is all about honesty, love and blessings. Those who learn honestly, love music and gain the blessings of elders succeed in the field. All others fail."



Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali Khan of Patiala Gharana

Ustads Amanat Ali and Fateh Ali Khan prepared raag Darbari for their first major performance in the court of Patiala

Ustad Fateh Ali Khan made his debut performance with his elder brother *Ustad* Amanat Ali Khan at the age of eleven in Calcutta at the All India Music Conference. The duo sang *raag Aimanand* and were accompanied by *Pandit* Kanthe Maharaj on the *tabla* and *Pandit* Gopal Mishra on



Ustad Amanat Ali Khan and Ustad Fateh Ali Khan

the *sarangi*. Bade Ghulam Ali was present for the performance and gave *nazar* to the *khalifas* (torch-bearers) of his *Ustad khana*, predicting great success for the two young masters.

The next major performance was organized by *Pandit* Jeevan Lal Mattoo at the YMCA hall in Lahore. *Pandit* Ravi Shankar, *Ustad* Hafiz Ali Khan, and *Ustad* Bismillah Khan were present at the event where the duo sang *Bageshri*, accompanied by Gurumukh Singh on *tabla* and Haider Bakhsh Faloosa on *sarangi*. The brother of the maharaja of Patiala was also present at the performance. He was impressed by the talent of the young musicians who were known to have ties with Patiala. He invited them to perform for the maharaja of Patiala at his birthday celebration. *Ustads* Amanat Ali and Fateh Ali Khan prepared *raag Darbari* for their first major performance in the court of Patiala. The performance began a little after midnight. After a long and leisurely *alaap*, they started the *bara khayal* (portion of *khayal* sung in slow tempo) with the famous *bandish*, *Mubarak Badian Shadian, Tohe Deni Allah Rasool*, in *ektala* and concluded the rendition with the *chota khayal* (portion of *khayal* sung in fast tempo), *Kuch Ajab Khel Kartar Ke*, in *drut* (fast) *Teentaal*. The *maharaja* immediately hired them as court musicians. In a matter of weeks, *Ustads* Amanat Ali and Fateh Ali Khan were receiving invitations to perform in courts all over the country, to participate in major musical conferences and sing at radio stations. The proper protocol for inviting court musicians at the time was to first seek permission from the *maharaja s* and *nawabs* to contact their court musicians. Once the permission was secured, messengers were sent to talk to the musicians who presented them with a *biyana* (partial payment made in advance), gifts and *meethai* (sweets). These were the golden years for the two young *Ustads* who enjoyed fame, fortune and admiration all over undivided India.

"[Partition] was a tragedy of massive proportions. We lost friends, family members, our homes and our property"

But that didn't last long.

The massacre of Muslims in Patiala around 1947 made life impossible for the family, who migrated to Lahore in 1948. The next few years were tough for the family. They were forced to stay as guests in the home of *sarangi* player *Ustad* Nazim Ali Khan until they could put together enough money to buy a house of their own. "Only we know

what we went through during Partition," says *Ustad* Fateh Ali Khan. "It was a tragedy of massive proportions. We lost friends, family members, our homes and our property. All we had was music when we landed in Lahore. It was not a time when people were interested in listening to music. Everyone faced big problems, both emotional and material, and was drowned in sadness. This was not a time for musicians to make a living by performing. We had to fight for our survival."

"A 'great artist' is one who has led a full life; one who has been through life's ups and downs, experienced love and betrayal"

Ustad Fateh Ali Khan feels that the hard times he and his family endured helped him make a better artist. "There is a difference between a 'competent singer' and a 'great artist', " he points out. " A competent singer has four (4) qualities. One, he is a *jaankar* (knowledgeable); two, he sings in *sur*(tune) and *laya* (rhythm); three, he understands *raag*(melodic mode) and *taal* (rhythmic cycle); and, finally he knows how to connect with the audience. It is necessary for a musician to possess these four (4) qualities and there are hundreds, if not thousands, of singers who possess these qualities. Yet, very few are truly great artists. A 'great artist' is one who has led a full life; one who has been through life's ups and downs, experienced love and betrayal, dealt with friends and enemies, survived poverty and abundance, and tried to make sense of all that life encompasses. When a 'great artist' performs, all that he has experienced in life is presented in his music. When a feeling he expresses resonates with that of the listeners, magic is created. Let us talk about Madam Noor Jehan, a student of our *gharana*, for a bit. When I listen to her, I am not looking for *raagdari*, *layakari*, *sur* and *taal* - those are a given - but for the emotion and feelings that her experiences in life allow her to bring to her music. And when I hear an emotion that I have experienced myself, tears come to my eyes. This is the power of a great artist. His experiences, feelings and emotions, conveyed through music, resonate with those of listeners."



Ustad Fateh Ali Khan and Ally Adnan in 1989



Ustad Ashiq Ali Khan

Ustad Fateh Ali Khan's singing embodies all the unique attributes and characteristics of the music of Patiala. He is proud of the qualities that differentiate Patiala from other *gharanas*. "We place a lot of emphasis on voice



Ustad Akhtar Hussain Khan

culture in our *gharana*. Our singers cover a full range of three (3) octaves, maintaining their tonal qualities over the entire register. The voice is full-throated and powerful but never harsh; rather it is sweet and almost nasal. Our singers have immense control over rhythm and tempo. We do not sing in very complex *taals*. Doing that creates difficulties for listeners. We prefer to use well-known rhythmic cycles like *Daadra* (rhythmic cycle of six beats), *Keharwa* (rhythmic cycle of eight beats), *Jhaptaal*, *Ektala* and *Teentaal*. Our focus is on

maintaining tempo accurately rather than on getting into the vagaries of complex rhythmic cycles. In Patiala, we place a great emphasis on *alankaar* (musical ornamentation) but it is done with restraint and care. The judicious use of *meend* (glissando), *gamak* (exaggerated vibrato), *khatka* (small cluster of notes sung rapidly, with each note being clearly audible), *murki* (a subtle form of *khatka*), *zamzama* (a form of *khatka* used in Punjab where the notes are organized in orderly sequences) and other musical adornments is our specialty. The *taans* we use in *vilambit* (slow tempo) are unique to that portion of *khayal*. We use different *taans* in *dhrut* (fast tempo) and unique ones in *tarana*. The *behlavas* (slow rendition of the notes) of *khayal* are different from those used in *thumri* (a musical genre). It is not enough to have expertise in rendering all ornamentations; one needs to know when and where to use each one of the *alankaars*. In Patiala we use all types of *taans* - *phirat*, *bol-taan*, *sapaat*, *komal-teevar*, *gammak*, *aakar*, *sarri*, *koot*, *larant*, *geetkaari* - at the right time and place. We enjoy interplay with our accompanists. We do not want *tabla* players to just play *theka* or *sarangi* players to just follow our singing. We want them to be participants in musical performances. Our vast repertoire of ancient and authentic *bandishes* is our real asset. No one else can lay a claim on our legacy of *bandishes*."



Ustad Fateh Ali Khan is an encyclopedia of authentic Delhi, Gwalior, Jaipur and Patiala *khayal bandishes*. "I know hundreds of *bandishes* that even my sons don't know," comment *Ustad Ji*. "I teach my students and my family members with great honesty.

"When I listen to Noor Jehan, I am looking for the emotion and feelings that her experiences in life allow her to bring to her music"

Yet, God has blessed me with such a vast repertoire that it will take ages to transfer all that I have committed to my memory."

In the 1980s, I used to visit *Ustad Ji*'s home in the Karim Park area in Lahore. Whenever he was in a good mood, and especially when his nephew Asad Amanat Ali Khan was around, he would sing *bandishes* that he said no one had heard in a hundred years. Over time, he allowed me to record one hundred and eight (108) such *bandishes*. In the more than eighty thousand (80,000) hours of music that I have managed to collect over my lifetime, I have never heard these *bandishes* from any other singer. *Ustad Ji* may well be the only person alive who knows them.

Generous only with sincere students and those he likes, *Ustad Fateh Ali Khan* jealously guards his vast catalog of authentic *bandishes*. "We do not compose new *bandishes* for *khayal*," declares *Ustad Ji* proudly. "All of our *khayal bandishes* are ancient. We sometimes compose *thumri bandishes* but for *khayal* there is no need to compose new material. I have been handed down hundreds of *bandishes* by my *ustads*. Those are plenty for one lifetime."

Ustad Ji admits that he does not like to sing the full text of the *bandishes* in public. "I need to protect my inheritance," he says. "If I sing complete texts of the songs I know, lesser singers would start singing them and claim them as their own heritage. I cannot allow that. Only sincere students and lovers of music get to listen to the full texts of traditional Gwalior, Delhi, Jaipur and Patiala *bandishes*. I do not hide these from my students. A well-composed *bandish* is more important than the *aarohi* (ascent), *avrohi* (descent) and *pakar* (sets of phrases that characterize a *raag*). It provides the full melodic form of a *raag*, pointing out the *vadi* (most prominent note in a *raag*) and *samvadi* (second most prominent note in a *raag*), and guiding the musician to perform the *raag* correctly. Unless the *bandish* is well composed, a musician cannot maintain proper balance between *sur* and *laya*. A *raag* cannot be sung correctly unless the *bandish* is flawless."

Student Abbas Ali Khan bears testimony to *Ustad Ji's* generosity with his students. "I am *anataayee* [musician who does not belong to a family of musicians] but *Ustad Ji* has always treated me as one of his own," says Abbas. "I believe that he has told me more than I have deserved. When I was working on my first album almost a decade ago, he asked me to record *Bhoopali* in a modern manner. I followed his direction and the song turned out to be the most popular one in the album, marking a positive turn in my career as a musician."

Ustad Fateh Ali Khan's sincerity as a teacher is well known all over the world. After teaching his US-based Afghan student, Humayun Khan, for several years, renowned sitarist *Ustad Vilayat Khan* asked him to study vocal music with *Ustad Fateh Ali Khan* in Pakistan. "My experience with *Ustad Ji* was magical," says Humayun. "I did not know Urdu at the time I became his student and he knew very little English. Yet, he was able to train me effectively. There were no questions he would not answer, no secrets he would keep. He was the ideal teacher."

Ustad Fateh Ali Khan's generosity is not limited to sharing his knowledge with those he loves and those he deems sincere; his is a gracious and large-hearted soul. He is full of praise for good singers not just of the Patiala *gharana* but also from competing schools of music. "I listen to the music of a lot of singers - Bade Ghulam Ali Khan, Naseer Ahmed Khan, Amir Khan, Salamat Ali Khan and Roshanara Begum," admits *Ustad Ji*. "There is no harm in listening to and learning from the music of great artists. It does not matter if they belong to your own *gharana* or to another, as long as they are good. This is not a field in which one can be narrow-minded and succeed. I have learnt a lot by listening to master musicians."

"Roshanara *Begum* was one of the greatest singers of the twentieth century. She had immense knowledge of music. She was a master of accuracy. She unfolded *raags* with great patience, expertise and discipline. Her *tayyari* (preparedness) was remarkable. Yet, she was remarkably humble and always eager to learn. *Begum Sahiba* greatly valued the *bandishes* that were composed by Allah Diya Khan Meherban, a student of *Jarnail Ali Bakhsh Khan*. She used to visit Ashiq Ali Khan regularly to learn these *bandishes* and recorded three (3) of them as well. There was a famous *bandish* in *Kedara*, set to *Teentaal*, that she was

particularly fond of.

Hind Main Naam Kiyo Fateh Ali Khan Nay
Kiya Farq Hai Jarnail Kaptan Main
Allah Meherban, Kant Aiso Diyo
Jis Ki Dhoom Machi Sagray Jahan Main
When she recorded our famous Adana bandish,
Taan Kaptan
Jag Main Kehla Gaye Fateh Ali Khan
Taan Balwant Ki Aisi Phirrat Hai
Jaisay Arjun Ji Kay Baan

even we felt that her rendition was superior to that of many singers of the Patiala *gharana*.

"My formal education came from my father and from *Ustad* Ashiq Ali Khan, but I have also learnt by listening to Bade Ghulam Ali Khan and *Ustad* Amir Khan. Bade Ghulam Ali Khan's application of *sur* was remarkable. I listened to him very carefully to understand his style. I studied the *barhat* (development) of *raga* by listening to Amir Khan's music. Good musicians are always looking to learn. Learning should never stop."

Comments (12 comments)

Great interview! Enjoyed it thoroughly. I wish Khan Sahib could mention Laxmi Shankar, Mukhtar Begum, Sardar Bai of Punjab (disciple of Bade Fateh Ali Khan Sahib: Queen Victoria of Patiala Gharana), Ustad AllaRakha (Tabla Nawaz who learnt gaeki from Ustad Asiq Ali Khan Sahib) and Ustad Fattu Khan (Sarangi Nawaz, brother in law of UstadAlla Dia Mehrban Khan Sahib). And I FAIL TO UNDERSTAND HOW USTAD UMEED ALI KHAN SAHIB IS categorised under Gawalior Gharana whereas his father Khan Sahib Piarey Khan Sahib was disciple of Jernail Sahib. Ustad Umeed Ali Khan sang, in most of his life with Ustad Ashiq Ali Khan (duet-jodi). Best regards.

Posted: Wednesday, March 27, 2013 by Ayub Aulia from London-UK

Beautiful! Thank you again. He is one of the last (if not, last) remaining exponents of the Patiala Gharana. A true Ustad!

Posted: Sunday, March 24, 2013 by Vijai from Canada

I'm blessed and grateful to god that I'm living at the same time of legendary Ustad Fateh Ali Khan. His music and his soul touches my feelings and shows me how an human being should be. And of course a special thank to Ally Adnan for this wonderful article. God bles you all!

Posted: Wednesday, March 20, 2013 by Siawash from London

Its a again a very nice piece of research. Written with passion, respect and love for music.

Posted: Tuesday, March 19, 2013 by Zeeshan from London

Once again a wonderful and full of knowledge article . Great work by Ally Adnan. Such a magician with pen. Hats off.

Posted: Tuesday, March 19, 2013 by Nabeel from melbourne

Ustad Bade Fateh Ali Khan, who does not need any introduction in the world of classical singing. He is a well know classcial vocalist from Pakistan and well trained in the style of patyala singing. Ally Adnan has written a beautiful article about him in which it includes a lot of information that we were not aware of. I am soo fortunate where i had the pleasure of having Usatd stay with me at my house in 1999 for about 3 months. I will never forget where i will wake up to hi practicings in early morning everyday by hearing his Taans in another room and then he we would sit together and have breakfast and the day will carry itself and i was also so fortunate where i attended all of his concerts in Virginia, Maryland and Washington Dc area and he will tell me his sweet stories about his musical career. The mornings used to start with his taans and the nights will end with his beautiful stories. Please take a bit of your time and read this awsome article by Ally bhai..... thank you all.....

Posted: Monday, March 18, 2013 by Humayoon Popal from Virginia USA

Really great Article. i always leaned music vocabulary fromyou. Thank you so mush for sharing

Posted: Monday, March 18, 2013 by Hassan Rana from Pakistan

Many Legends have gone unheard and the talent has gone wasted just because they didn't find great people like Mr Ally Adnan to promote them to the world.

Posted: Monday, March 18, 2013 by Harpreet Singh from England

SPOT ON> Full of knowledge,

Posted: Sunday, March 17, 2013 by Jawad from Melbourne- Australia

nice appreciable

Posted: Sunday, March 17, 2013 by ustad yesraz from kathamandu

ustad fateh ali khan is real khalifa of patiyala gharana this is all true i have heard that same thing from my elders nobody can deny it. it is a open history god bless him

Posted: Saturday, March 16, 2013 by nasir desai from delhi

That is great article. I am please Mr. Adnan spent some time introducing a long living legend Ustad

Fateh Ali Khan for the wider audience. In fact a legend like Ustad Fateh Ali Khan does not need any more introduction as he has proved himself to the music lovers from the age of eleven, but yet it is nice to know more and more about him. Mr Adnan I truly admire your great job.

[Posted: Friday, March 15, 2013 by Dr. Mohsen Keiany from UK](#)

The true ustad - Part III

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Ustad Fateh Ali Khan and Ally Adnan

Ustad Umeed Ali Khan was another great influence on Ustad Fateh Ali Khan's music. "He was my maternal uncle and a student of the Gwalior *gharana*," says Ustad Fateh Ali Khan. "He used to sing *jugalbandi* [a duet of two soloists] with Ustad Ashiq Ali Khan of Patiala. Few musicians could match his *raagdari* [ability to render *raags* correctly]. He was able to establish the complete nature of a *raag* during the *aalaap* [introductory passage in music sung without rhythm]. His use of *behlavas* and *murkis* was masterful. I was in love with his music and ended up marrying his daughter even though there was a huge age difference between us. I just needed to be associated with the great Ustad."

The Patiala *Gharana* has produced more famous singers than any other *gharana*. Ustad Ashiq Ali Khan, Bade Ghulam Ali Khan, Ustad Barkat Ali Khan, Ustad Amanat Ali Khan, Ustad Fateh Ali Khan, Mohammad Hussain Sarahang, Akhtari Bai Faizabadi, Ghulam Ali, Pandit Ajoy Chakrabarty, Farida Khanum, Zahida Parveen, Hussain Bakhsh Dhahri, Parveen Sultana, Meera Bannerjee, Hussain Bakhsh Gullo, Nirmala Devi, Hamid Ali Khan, Asad Amanat Ali Khan, Kaushiki Chakrabarty and, of course, *Mallika-e-Taranum* Noor Jehan, to name a few. This impressive roster includes singers of *khayal*, *thumri*, *tarana*, *daadra*, *ghazal*, *geet*, *kafi*, *chaiti*, *tappa*, *saadara*, and many other genres of vocal music. No other *gharana* of music has produced singers that excel in virtually all other major genres of vocal music.

"A lot has been said about the rivalry between me and Salamat Ali Khan"



Ustad Salamat Ali Khan

"Ours is the only *gharana* that focuses on teaching music," claims Ustad Fateh Ali Khan proudly. "We don't teach *khayal*, or *thumri* or *ghazal* or any other specific genre. We focus on teaching our students music in its purest form. Patiala musicians can sing anything they want to. Barkat Ali Khan laid the foundation of singing *ghazal* and was a master of *thumri*. Farida Khanum and Ghulam Ali are two of the greatest *ghazal* singers of all time. Few people can sing *kafilike* Zahida Parveen and Hussain Bakhsh Dhahri. Begum Akhtar established the standard by which *ghazal*, *dadra* and *thumri* is evaluated today. Noor Jehan is believed by many to be the greatest singer of all times, even though she sang mostly *ghazal* and *geet* during her career. Ashiq Ali Khan, Bade Ghulam Ali Khan and Amanat Ali Khan were masters of *khayal*. We even sing *marsiya* [elegiac poems written to commemorate the martyrdom of Imam Hussain] that most singers are afraid to touch. Amanat Ali Khan composed the famous *marsiya*, *Mujra E Khalq Main In Aankhon Nay Kya Kya Dekha*, in *Pahari*. *Yeh Sochta Hun Abid Ka Haal Kya Ho Ga* is my composition in *Todi*. Our *marsiyas* have become paradigms of the genre. Today, I sing *khayal*, *tarana*, *thumri*, *dadra*, *ghazal*, *kafi*, *geet*, *naat*, *marsiya*, *soz* and *nauha*. Not many musicians can make that claim. When one truly knows singing, genre does not matter; only music does. That is what Patiala teaches."

Despite his tremendous talent and standing in the world of music, *Ustad Ji* is remarkably down to earth. He makes few demands of fellow musicians and accompanists, stage managers, audio engineers and program organizers. "Musicians need to be good human beings first and foremost," says Ustad Fateh Ali Khan. "A musician who makes life difficult for others is not a

"When one truly knows singing, genre does not matter"

great artiste. In my career, I have been accompanied by the greatest tabla players - Ahmad Jan Thirakwa, Allah Rakha Khan, Shaukat Hussain Khan, Chatur Lal, Kanthe Maharaj, Allah Ditta Biharipuriya, Karim Bakhsh Pairna - and by all major sarangi players - Nathu Khan, Nazim Ali Khan, Nabi Bakhsh Khan, Gopal Mishra, Ram Narayan, Bundoo Khan, Hamid Hussain Khan. Yet I do not mind being accompanied by young and upcoming artistes. It is my duty to encourage new artistes and to teach them the art of accompaniment. I do not believe in acting like a prima donna. I am secure in my knowledge of music."



Ustad Fateh Ali Khan and his brother Ustad Amanat Ali Khan

Indeed, Ustad Fateh Ali Khan is one of the few artistes who allow accompanying sarangi and tabla players to perform together with him in pure jugalbandi style. The Amanat-Fateh and Salamat-Nazakat duos are credited with introducing musical interplay and dialog with tabla and sarangi players to our music. The practice, more prevalent in Pakistan than in India, has allowed accompanying musicians to get the recognition that eluded them for centuries.

Ustad Fateh Ali Khan has performed all over the world during an illustrious career spanning more than seven decades, but he enjoys singing most in India and Afghanistan. "Pakistan may be home to great vocalists but the best listeners are not in this country," believes *Ustad Ji*. "My best performances have been in Calcutta and Kabul. In Pakistan, there is only one place that I really enjoy singing in and that is the village of Jalalpur Jattan. The listeners of the small town are the best in this country."

In 1988 Ustad Fateh Ali Khan invited me to accompany him to a concert in Jalalpur Jattan. This small village lies in the Gujrat district of Punjab. The concert had been arranged by the town's Christian community and held in the local

church. Ustad Shaukat Hussain Khan and Ustad Nazim Ali Khan traveled with us to the town. The church was small and could hardly accommodate the audience of more than 300 people who showed up for *Ustad Ji's* performance. Ustad Fateh Ali Khan had been talking about performing Raag Darbari on the way to the village but changed his mind when he got up on stage and started singing Raag Jaijaiwanti. The *aalaap* lasted for more than 20 minutes and was reminiscent of Gwalior. He chose the *bandish Piya Ghar Na Aaye* in *ektala* for the *bara khayal*, setting the *ati vilambit* (ultra slow) tempo at about eight beats per minute. This required intense concentration on the part of not just the musicians but also the audience but everyone was ready and participated in perfect concord. The great ustad took his time to unfold *Jaijaiwanti*, exploring each one of the secrets of the raag with great expertise. An hour later, *Ustad Ji* was working leisurely on *behlavas* when he lost his concentration momentarily. He mistook the *tu* (fifth beat) tabla *bol* for *dhin* (11th beat) and was about the use a *tiya* to land falsely on the *sam* when Shaukat *Saab* figured out what was about to happen and used a stroke of the *daggi* (larger tabla) to indicate the correct beat to *Ustad Ji*.

"I have lost so much to alcohol"

And while Ustad Fateh Ali Khan did not go off beat, this was the one time in a public performance that he came close to forgetting the *theka*. Most singers would have blamed the percussionist for the situation, but Ustad Fateh Ali Khan acknowledged the support he received from *Ustad* Shaukat Hussain Khan by announcing, " *Yeh mujhay bacha gaye hain.*" ('He has saved me.') Then he moved all the money he had been given in *nazar* by the audience from in front of him towards Shaukat Sahab. On the way back to Lahore he told me that a lesser tabla player would have let him make the mistake and publicized it all over the country but Shaukat Saab was a gentleman. "Shaukat has accompanied me for years," he said. "He knows how to read my mind and accompanies me in exactly the manner that I want. No tabla player but Shaukat could have accompanied me in the slow tempo that I used for the performance. No one. There is no better tabla player in the world."

Jaijaiwanti - Fateh Ali Khan (Vocal) -Nazim Ali Khan (Sarang...han (Tabla)) - 3



Ustad Fateh Ali Khan with his son Rustam Fateh Ali Khan

Ustad Fateh Ali Khan had a lifelong friendship and rivalry with Ustad Salamat Ali Khan. The two had immense respect for each other. I remember an incident at the Lahore Fort from 1989. Pakistan Television had organized a show called *Jashn-e-Baharan* to celebrate the arrival of spring. The two Ustads along with more than fifty musicians had been booked to perform at the event. Our tradition of music dictates that senior artistes perform after junior artistes. The producers of the programs were nervous about the possibility of a fight erupting between the two maestros, since the order in which they sang would indicate hierarchy. No one had the courage to decide the order in which they would perform. When all other singers had performed, the tension in the makeshift green room became palpable. The two Ustads knew what was going on and decided - individually but in unison - to defuse the situation by offering to perform before the other. They had nothing to prove; secure in their own expertise, both were equally willing to perform first. In the end, Ustad Salamat Ali Khan sang *Darbari* first and Ustad Fateh Ali Khan ended the evening with a superb rendition of *Malkauns*. I was covering the event for a monthly publication. *Ustad Ji* instructed me not to mention the order in which the two maestros sang that night. "Neither one of us is better than the other," he told me. "Writing about the order in which we sang would be doing a disservice to our friendship."

Malkauns - Ustad Fateh Ali Khan - Amjad Amanat Ali Khan - PTV Jashn E Baharan - 1989

"A lot has been said about the rivalry between me and Salamat Ali Khan," says Ustad Fateh Ali Khan now. "The rivalry did exist but the relationship was anything but antagonistic. We respected each other as human beings and as artistes. He was the only partner I had in my long and arduous journey in the field of music. We both started out as singing duos with our brothers and lost them at the peaks of our careers. We understood each other's music. We

enjoyed each other's company. We liked to talk about music, about life, about religion, about politics. There were things that I could discuss only with Salamat Ali Khan. Only he understood what it meant to be an ustad in Pakistan. I miss him the same way I miss Amanat Ali Khan."

"I have experienced a lot of tragedy in my life," laments Ustad Fateh Ali Khan. "I lost my brother when I was forty years old. My father had trained us in complementary portions of *khayal*. Amanat Ali Khan used to focus on *aalaap* and *behlava*. My specialty was *taan* and *tayyari*. His death dealt me a double blow. I lost a brother and my partner in music. This happened two years after the death of my father. His death paralyzed me emotionally and I was unable to sing for a long time. My mother, who was the daughter of the famous Ustad Pyaaray Khan, pulled me out of the deep depression that I had fallen into after the two successive deaths. She helped me practice Amanat Ali Khan's portion of *khayal* and, with her encouragement, guidance and prayers, I was able to start performing again.

"I raised Amanat Ali Khan's son Asad as my own, teaching him music like a father. Asad wanted to do a formal *shagirdi* with me but I refused to do one because one never makes his son a *shagird*. He was always a son to me. A few years ago, I lost Asad. That loss was hard to bear but the most tragic loss was that of my relationship with my younger brother, Hamid Ali Khan. He is alive but leads a life in which there is no room for me. I raised him as a father. I taught him as an Ustad. And then one day, he just abandoned me. Life has been tough."

Alcohol and drugs have never been kind to the family. Ustad Ashiq Ali Khan was addicted to opium. Ustad Amanat Ali Khan's love for alcohol claimed his life.

Drugs took over Asad's life and music while he was in his twenties. "I am scared of alcohol," admits Ustad Fateh Ali Khan. "I have lost so much to alcohol that I detest drinking. People have tried to introduce drugs and drink to me but I have resisted. There is no winning with substance abuse. Only losing."

Ustad Fateh Ali Khan now lives in Islamabad where he teaches at an academy of music and at his residence. He is not happy with the state of music in Pakistan today. "India has a few good singers coming up," he says. "A few members of Ustad Naseer Ahmed Khan's family are singing well in India. Things are, however, not good in Pakistan. My son, Rustam Fateh Ali Khan, is singing well but needs to work harder. Much harder. Salamat Ali Khan's son Shafqat Salamat Ali Khan is a talented and knowledgeable musician but has trouble sustaining notes accurately. There really is no one today in Pakistan who has the makings of a great musician.



It is all in the hands of God now. Only He can bring music back to Pakistan."

Comments (7 comments)

Lovely anecdotes and insights about the legendary singer and Patiala gharana! Thank you for sharing.

Posted: Monday, April 01, 2013 by Nandita from Dubai

Ally, your work is exceptional. It's so personal, engaging, and vivid. It hits the reader hard and leaves a lasting impact. Please continue to share your writing. Thank you always!

Posted: Sunday, March 24, 2013 by Arif Mahmood from dallas Texas

nothing in the jaijaiwanti recording

Posted: Sunday, March 24, 2013 by shankar from bay area

Spot on .. great work Ally Adnan ...

Posted: Saturday, March 23, 2013 by Nabeel Riaz from Australia

no doubt that music gives you life but here your words gave life to music .

Posted: Friday, March 22, 2013 by Hassan Rana from Pakistan

Its a good continuing sequence of Classical Gharana , why not we get to see the Shajra-e-nasb or hierarchy of Patlana Gharana and how many are where in Indo-Pak ? Must be so easy to understand.

Posted: Friday, March 22, 2013 by Imtiaz Alam from Pakistan

truly a delight to read. great work Ally Bhai...

Posted: Friday, March 22, 2013 by Ali Zafar from Lahore
