

# Striking Glimpses Associated with Ghulam Ali and His Evergreen Ghazals



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## Abstract

In the context of Ghazal as a major trend of music, the contribution of the Urdu authors, poets and shayars cannot be underestimated. The same is true of the Pakistani ghazal singers who, through their ghazals and singing all over the world, proved the saying that art knows no boundaries of nations and religions.

Of course, a true artist belongs to no nation, rather he is universal. In the world, there have been and there are several ghazal singers, but some have occupied an ever-safe place in the music world. One of such artists is Ghulam Ali who is the crown-ghazal singer.

Ghulam Ali, a well-known singer and composer of the Patiala Gharana of Hindustani classical music, is a Ghazal singer from Pakistan. A hard training of about fourteen years imparted to him by his music teacher and mentor Bade Ustad led him to explore the unexplored world of vocal music, and thus enabled him to prove himself to be a crown figure in music.

Ghulam Ali is always original in his ghazals and other vocal creations, and it is his identity which magnetically draws and attracts the audience of the world to his ghazal-creations. With the exception of the singing of the ghazals of others, he sings his own ghazals. Even if the ghazals were sung by some others, while singing them, he installs something that belongs to Ghulam Ali, thus making them to be characterized by his name.

The paper serves as a short biographical sketch of the world-famous ghazal singer Ghulam Ali, and is a review article. The findings of the study reveal that Ghulam Ali occupies an important place in the world of music as a vocalist and ghazal singer.

**Keywords:** Glimpses, Evergreen, Ghazals, Urdu poetry, Classical Singing

## Introduction

Born on 5<sup>th</sup> December 1940 in Kaleki Sialkot district in Punjab which now falls in the Pakistani territory, Ustad Ghulam Ali, probably the best and greatest ghazal singer in the world, is identified as a Pakistani vocalist. However, his being a citizen of Pakistan did not keep him limited only to Pakistan and its audience.

As a ghazal singer and vocalist, he rules over the world and attracts the music and ghazal lovers more and more with the passage of time. In India, his not an unfamiliar name. His popularity as a ghazal singer can be noticed through this fact everyone likes to sing and listen Ghulam Ali's typically singular ghazals. As a vocalist, he belongs to the Patiala gharana, and thus carries on the traditions of the Patiala gharana through his singing.

He is fortunate enough to have Bade Ghulam Ali Khan as his mentor under whose supervision and guidance, he learnt a great deal in vocal music. It is Bade Ghulam Ali Khan who helped him go into the deeper and deeper and unexplored corners of music through singing. It should not be forgotten that Bade Ghulam Ali Khan refused to teach him music at first, and that as a result of the repeated requests of his father to him, and especially, as a result of the impression of the thumri- Saiyan Bolo Tanik Mose Rahiyo na Jaye, he accepted Ghulam Ali as his disciple.

The mentor made him familiar with all the ragas, notes, note-taking, high-pitch singing. Indeed, the 14-year training of classical music imparted to him by Bade Ghulam Ali Khan, brought Ghulam Ali closer to perfection which is the dream of every artist.

Being a born artist and singer, he started showing signs of having inexhaustible music potential, quite early when he was barely 13 years old at the point of time when he started working as a child-artist and singer on Radio Pakistan Lahore.

Ghulam Ali's whole hearted devotion and dedication to music is tremendously memorable. He was not only a vocalist but also a recitalist. He had a wonderful and incredible mastery over harmonium and tabla which he often used to play. While performing ghazals on the stage, this mastery over harmonium was evident on all the occasions.

As far as Tabla-playing is concerned, one example is enough to prove it, and it is the one when at one of his concerts at Singapore, he played Tabla amazing everyone at the concert. Indeed, he had a wonderful liking for vocal and recital music that formed his life and world. In the Indian context, his friendship with the famous ghazal singer Jagjit Singh, his voice in some of the popular Hindi movies through his ghazals, his visits and stage performances etc. are so noticeable.

The list of the awards that Ghulam Ali won throughout his career is very long. Hereunder, some of the special awards are enlisted-

1. The Pride of Performance Award, 1979
2. Sitara-i-Imtiaz Award, 2012
3. The first person to receive the Bade Ghulam Ali Khan Award, 2013
4. The first person to receive Swaralaya Global Legend Award, 2016

The ghazals of Ghulam Ali that acclaim immortality in the world of music and ghazals include the following-

1. Raga Mishra-based ghazal- Balam Mohe Chhodke Na Ja
2. Dadra-based ghazal- Kahe Banao Jhoothi Batiyan
3. Raga Peelu-based ghazal- Tum Bin Aave na Chan
4. Raga Mahiya-based ghazal- Baagon mein jhoole pade, Tum bhool gaye hamko
5. Chupke-chupke raat din aansu bahana yaad hai
6. Chamakte Chaand ko toota hua tara bana dala
7. Hangama hai kyu barpa thodi si jo pi li hai
8. Ye dil ye paagal dil mera kyu bujh gaya- awaragi
9. Hum tere shahar mein aye hein musafir ki tarah
10. Kal Chaudahavi ki raat thi
11. Apni dhun mein rahata hu etc.

#### **Review of Literature**

Chinthaka Prageeth Meddegoda (2014), in *Voice Cultures in Hindustani Classical Music*, explains that the distinctiveness of Hindustani vocal music is articulated through analyzing the use and application of several melodic shapes sung in different genres thus contributing to a general overview on their musical diversity. Different degrees of intensity in melodic shapes sung in music genres are discussed, because they may cause remarkable changes from one genre to another although the same melodic shapes are applied. Taking this as a point of departure, the question of which cultural and historical contexts determine voice cultures is examined.

Arindam Bhattacharjee & Narayan Srinivasan (2011), in *Hindustani Raga Representation and Identification: A Transition Probability Based Approach* explain that most research on perception and identification of complex musical sequences has focused on Western music and very little work has

been done with Indian classical music. This paper focuses on an aspect of Indian classical music called the raga system. The uniqueness of raga system is its wide scope for improvisation, which consequently poses problems for raga identification/classification. Moreover, this also leads to a question that if ragas are always improvised then how are they represented in our mind? In this paper we proposed a cognitively plausible representation – called Transition Probability Matrix (TPM) – for ragas and further evaluated its effectiveness in performing raga identification. We computed ten TPMs (one for each raga considered in this study) where each TPM characterizes the conditional probabilities embedded in swara (i.e. musical note) sequences of a raga. We acquired hundred arbitrary sequences from the ten ragas and performed raga classification; classification accuracy was 100%. We also evaluated the TPM representation by extracting relationships between ragas using multiple measures. The excellent classification results and the ability of TPMs to characterize raga relationships show that TPMs constitute an efficient cognitive representation for a raga.

Nonika Singh (2011), in *Moving Along Chupke Chupke* Legendary Ghazal Singer Ghulam Ali, in Chandigarh for a Music Launch, shares that Of course, Ghulam Ali observes that in ghazal gayaki poetry is very important. So is the manner of rendering it with feeling. But has it stooped touching the emotional chord among listeners? He nods, "Of course, today distractions are many. To appreciate beautiful things of life, you need junoon; must have ishq for it." In Pakistan too, he shares, that the tribe of ghazal lovers is dwindling but the only bright side is that Urdu is being taught and people are well-versed with the language. Without doubt he holds his great ustads in high esteem and shares that he has never heard singing quite close to theirs. And it's not just classical training, but each word of theirs for him is the gospel truth. Music indeed is the ultimate truth whose purity he has never felt pressurised to compromise. He has nothing against new forms of music or even platforms like Coke Studio.

Ram K. Nawasalkar and Pradeep K. Butey (2012), in *Analytical and Comparative Study on effect of Indian Classical Music on human body using EEG based signals*, explain that Music is playing dominant role in human life. Due to heavy work load person can listen music to relax. The main aspect of the affective computing is to make computer more compatible to the user and this can be done by "getting into" users head to observe the mental state by using certain physiological device like EEG. This paper describes how to recognize and percept emotions from brain signals while listening the Indian classical music measured with the electroencephalogram (EEG) device.

Rabi Banerjee (September 25, 2016), in *The ghazal bridge*, observes that though Ali was born in Pakistan, he owes his name to one of the most famous classical singers in India—Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali Khan. Ali's father was a fan of the ustad, and begged him to take young Ali under his wing. The

ustad agreed. Since 1960, Ali has been performing in Pakistan. After 1980, he entered the Indian music scene and established himself with concerts and memorable songs in Bollywood. Ghulam Ali often opens his concerts with this famous song written by Pakistani poet Adeem Hashmi: "Faasle aysi bhi hogi, yeh kabhi socha nah tha [Never thought the distance would be so much]". The song refers to the distance between two lovers. But, Ali could be singing about the gulf between India and Pakistan. Especially after the Shiv Sena told the Pakistani ghazal maestro that he was unwelcome in India.

P.K Ajith Kumar (2016), in A musical journey, with Ghulam Ali, shares his own experience saying that.....they came in thousands, when the sun was still shining brightly. The night was quite some distance away, and they knew they would have to wait for a few hours. But, they were willing to wait. "It is not every night that you get an opportunity to listen to the greatest living Ghazal singer. And Ghulam Ali did not disappoint them. When the Pakistani singer came on to the stage at the Swapna Nagari, at about 7.30 p.m., the crowd — about 15,000 of them — erupted in joy. If they feared the ageing maestro may sing only a couple of songs and leave the rest to the other singers, including his son Amir Ghulam Ali, those fears proved misplaced.

#### **Objectives of the Study**

1. To develop a familiarity with music at large
2. To develop an understanding of the classical music
3. To reflect the major trends of the Indian classical music
4. To introduce Ghulam Ali as a ghazal singer
5. To trace and describe the various personality traits of Ghulam Ali as a ghazal singer
6. To define the role of the mentor in the making of an artist and singer
7. To mirror the whole-hearted devotion of Ghulam Ali to music
8. To describe Ghulam Ali's relationship with India and the Indian singers and ghazal singers
9. To make a reflection on some of the popular ghazal-creations of Ghulam Ali
10. To Assess and evaluate Ghulam Ali's uncontroversial status as a ghazal singer

#### **Hypothesis**

1. Everything including all the arts need a proper understanding
2. Classical music is the real original music and it needs proper understanding to pass through the channels on the part of the learners
3. The classical music is characterized by its varied trends that emerged from time to time
4. Ghazal is one of the major trends of classical music characterized by the singularity of style of singing and performing
5. The ghazal singers are known for their sense of universality
6. Ghulam Ali's status as a ghazal singer is uncontroversial
7. Ghulam Ali's ghazals are characterized by typical classical touch

8. The mentor plays a vital role in the making of a singer
9. Whole-hearted devotion is essential on the part of the learners
10. Artists are globally interconnected with one another
11. Born artists lead to higher horizons of success and achievement through hard work

#### **Methodology**

A review article in its form and contents, the paper falls in the category of descriptive and interpretative study and research. The things that paved the path of making the study and basis include the objectives that were borne in mind throughout for the sake of inclining to the selected theme; secondary data borrowed from the traditional and modern secondary sources of data collection that enabled the author to go into the depth of the issue and to be familiar with the subject of the study; hypothesis formulated on the basis of the personal experiences and the socio-cultural scenario in the surroundings; thorough study of the selected studies; compilation of the contents; analysis of the contents of the selected studies; interpretation and description of the major aspects associated with the theme and subject, and finally, the conclusion.

Replete with the element of objectivity, the article works out all the steps prescribed for the review studies.

#### **Findings**

1. Without the proper understanding, it is not only difficult but absolutely impossible to do justice to the classical music which is based on various ragas, notes, fluctuation of pitch, rhythmical element, effects
2. Classical music is the real original music. Taken as the voice of God, it is believed to be capable enough to move the hearts not only of human beings but also of animals and birds
3. At the root of the existence of nature and world, there lies the classical music that forced the jarring atoms to go to their respective places, and to make space for the nature and world to exist
4. There are several trends of classical music, both in the vocal and the recital music
5. Vocal music requires regular practice and whole hearted devotion on the part of all those who go for it
6. Ghazal is one of the major and most popular trends of classical music capable of drowning the audience in their heart and in spouting out their emotions
7. The world of ghazals is constituted by several ghazal singers who lived over the geographical and national limitations
8. Ghulam Ali, the famous Pakistani ghazal singer, is a universally approved personality whose ghazals are enjoyed all over the world
9. Typical classical touch, lower and higher pitch of singing, emotional overflow, use of ragas, rhythmical note and element and the harmony of all the elements required for the singing of ghazals are the characterizing elements of the ghazals of Ghulam Ali

10. In the making of Ghulam Ali a Ghazal-Samrat, there is the role and contribution of his mentor Bade Ghulam Ali Khan who refined the ghazal singing talent in his disciple through a caring attitude
11. The legacy of Ghulam Ali in the form of his ghazals is so vast and important to the world of music.

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