



Four Generations of Imadādkhānī Gharānā: A Critical Study of Jhālā

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Abstract

Jhālā is an integral part of the *sitār* recital, and the *sitār* players have been using this *amg* as the concluding section since 1900. Several texts describe the variations as *Ulat Jhālā*, *Sulat Jhālā*, *Thok Jhālā*, *Kattar Jhālā*, and other variations like *bol*-designs on the *cikārī*. There are significant studies on the evolution of *sitār*, playing styles, techniques, and construction. Roychoudhary, B and Bandyopadhyay, Sripada mentioned different types of *Jhālā* but did not describe them under the reference of Imdadkhani Gharana. Roychaudhary also enumerated various forms of *Jhālā* as sub-sections of 12- *amg ālāp*. The current investigation identified the characteristic forms of *Jhālā*, the components carried forward and percolated through the lineage of Imdadkhani Gharana. The research identified and studied 30 sample videos of Imdad Khan, Inayat Khan, Vilayat Khan, and Shujaat Khan from the YouTube repository. The data covers 118 years, from 1904 to 2022, as referenced on YouTube. These recordings were critically analysed. The findings reveal that the basic structural form of *Jhālā* remained intact, with a few additions in variations with the transitions from one generation to the next.

Keywords: hindustānī Rāg Music, Indian Classical Music, imadādkhānī gharānā, Jhālā

1. Introduction

Jhālā is the only induction from instrumental music to vocal tradition, the form which can undoubtedly be relished and appreciated by one and all. It is a rhythmic pattern played with a combination of *cikārī* (drone string) and *bāj kā tār* (main melody string of plucked string Instruments) in a fast tempo. Vilayat Khan once explained during his concert that the right

hand keeps the rhythm, and the left hand creates the melody in *jhālā* (Bhattacharya). This form usually ends a *drut tritāl* expositions¹. So, 16 *mātrā-s* of *tritāl* get primarily distributed in a 4+4+4+4 structure. In *sulat* or *sīdhā Jhālā*, the first stroke in any part of a pattern falls on *bāj kā tār*. In *ulat jhālā* this gets the opposite, and the first stroke falls on the *cikārī*.

Roy Chaudhury describes that the *cikārī* is the combined sound of the last three strings of *sitār* tuned in lower P [5th], middle [6th], and upper S [7th], which generates a harmonic foreground for the raga melody played on the main string. The whole execution is called *jhālā* (13). Because of the sweet and melodious effect, the *vīṇā* players called it *jhamkār*. Later *sitār* players changed the name to *jhālā* (Bandopadhyay, Sripad 41). *jhālā* is referred to as a form for the *pakhavaj*, which is exclusively designed to accompany the concluding section of stringed instruments (Ranade 152). Miner describes some similar terms - *jhārā*, *jīvā*, and *jhūlanā* for *Jhālā*. She also referenced to some 19th-century texts such as *Ma-adunal-Musiqui* by Mohammad Karam Imam, *Naad Vinod* by Panna Lal Goswami, *Ragvobodh* by Somnath, which talks about *bol-s* and *sargam* for *jhālā*, *thok*, and *laḍī* (67-71).

This study gives an insight into the structure, development, and changes in stylistic and aesthetic approach to the most popular section of Instrumental performance and its forms. The present study aims to identify the (a) general practice in *jhālā* playing in *imadādkhānī gharānā* and its chronological transitions, (b) identifying the components carried forward by the generations and the components that were left behind, and (c) the new additions with the chronological advancements.



Imdadkhani Gharana

Imdadkhani Gharana, earlier known as *iṭāvā gharānā*, was named after Imdad Khan (1848- 1920), a *sitār* and *surbahār* player². He was trained under his father, Sahabdad Khan, in vocal tradition. Because of some differences with his father at a very young age, he had to forgo singing and started playing *sitār* and *surbahār* (Chanda 81-82)³. He blended his knowledge of *masītakhānī bāj*, Bande Ali Khan's *vīṇā* content, and attributes of Haddu Khan's vocal tradition (Chanda 82). This coalescence of *sitār*, *veena*, and vocal attributes founded a new style of *sitār*

1 Traditionally, *Jhālā* is also played in *cautāla*, *āḍā cautāla* and *sūlatāla*. During the last century, musicians of

rāmapura seniṅyā school also played *jhālā* in talas like *rūpaka*, *ekatāla* and *jhapatāla* (Bandopadhyay, Sanjoy).

2 Roy Chaudhary popularised Imdad Khan's style as Imdad Khani Baaz during 1940s.

³ An interesting anecdote is mentioned in an article on Imdad Khan published in the Bengali journal "Basudhara" written by Roy Chaudhary, Bimalakanta in 1961. Later it was translated into English by Chanda S and published in his book *The Imdadkhani Baj: India's Premier Sitar Gharana*.

and *surabahār* playing. The credit for adding *cikārī* strings on the *sitār* is also attributed to Imdad Khan. Subhas Chanda mentions that "Senia's of Jaipur did not play *jhālā* on *sitār*. Even the *cikārī* strings necessary for playing *jhālā* were absent in the Jaipur *sitār*. Imdad Khan introduced *cikārī* strings on the *sitār* and started playing all varieties of *jhālā* of *vīṇā* on *sitār*" (83). However, this version contradicts Miner's statement, "In Delhi, *sitār* players concentrated on the *Gat-Todā* genre of Masit Khan. They incorporated all of their techniques, including *bīnt* techniques and *jhālā*, into their *gat-s* and *toda-s*." (126)

Three descendants of Imdad Khan

The current study focus on four generations of Imdadkhani Gharana. Imdad Khan's son Inayat Khan (1894–1938), followed his family's tradition and became the highly prominent *Sitār* and *Surabahār* players of his time. He introduced 3-4 note *mīṁḍ*, *sapāṭ tān*, *ikaharā tāna*, and innovative patterns of intricate *bol-s*, *khamḍārabānī gamak*, *tihāī* and introduced 'tarab' strings on *sitār*. He was famous for his explicit *Jhālā*. (Bhattacharya)

The third generation musician of this *gharānā* Vilayat Khan was trained under his mother Bashiran Begum, Wahid Khan, his maternal grandfather Bande Hussain Khan, and maternal uncle Zinde Huassan Khan after his father Inayat Khan's demise (Raja; Khan 111). VK successfully and aesthetically assimilated the inputs he received from many revered musicians in his *sitār* playing. His contribution towards developing technical and structural aspects of *sitār* and incorporating *khayāl aṁg* made his *sitār* uniquely brilliant. Because of his unparalleled contributions, people have started recognising his style as *vilayātakhānī bāj* (Parikh 31-41; Bhattacharya).

The fourth musician in this study is Vilayat Khan's son Shujaat Khan. He is a highly distinguished *sitār* player who could find his voice in the field.

Forms of Jhālā

The common forms of *jhālā*, *sulat Jhālā* (*sīdhā jhālā*), *ulat Jhālā* (*ulṭā jhālā*), *ṭhok and kattar jhālā*, as mentioned in the texts⁴, were evident in the samples. Among these four *Jhālā* forms, the *kattar jhālā* tries replicating the *pakhawaj's* *kat*-focused compositions. The texts do not adequately describe specific techniques for employing the *sitār* strings for this style of *jhālā*



Roy Chaudhary Bimalakanta, Chanda Subhas, Bandopadhyay Sripad and Miner Allyn playing. Texts only described the *pakhāvaj* bols like, kat, tita kat, tita kat kat, tita-kat, kat titakat, kat titakat kat, kat ka tita, kat kar kat tit, takita takita kat, kat, tita kat, kat kat etc. Parikh mentioned another form - *double jhālā* in the ITC SRA “Seminar on Sitār”. It can be assumed that the use of dir dir on *cikārī* in *jhālā* can be the same (38).

sīdhā Jhālā also described as *sulat jhālā* (Bandyopadhyay, Sanjoy), mostly played in *tritāl*⁵ with the distribution of 4+4+4+4 similar to the *mātrā* distributions in the *tāl*. In this type of *jhālā*, the first stroke falls on the *bāja kā tāra*. *Ulat jhālā* is a reverse form of *sīdhā jhālā* that takes its first strokes on the *cikārī* and the rest on the *bāja kā tāra*. *ṭhoka Jhālā* was considered to be a difficult form, which comprised the backward strokes hitting the *tabālī*.

The Jhālā forms can be described under eight categories covering all variations⁶.

- 1) More number of 'Ra' strokes on *cikārī* and less number of 'Da' on *bāja kā tāra*.
- 2) Combination strokes (Elaborate) on *cikārī* with 'Da' on the main string.
- 3) Longer combination stroke phrases on the *cikārī* and shorter combinations on the main string.
- 4) similar length combination stroke phrases on both the main string and the *cikārī*
- 5) a larger number of 'Da' strokes on the main string with one 'Ra' on the *cikārī* in between.
- 6) combination stroke patterns on the main string with one 'Ra' on the *cikārī* in between.
- 7) making the sound of wood (on *tabālī*) with a 'Ra' stroke on the main string in combination
 - a) with 'Ra' on *cikārī*
 - b) use of different combinations of strings (other strings of *sitār* except for *bāj* and *cikārī*) while playing *jhālā*.
- 8) Other variations may be obtained by ‘*kākubheda*’ (changing the intensity of sound), changing, *laya* and *gati*.

5 Traditionally Jhālā is also played in Chautal, Ada-Choutal, and Sooltal. These were played especially in Veena and later inducted by sitār and sarod. During the last century musicians of Rampur Senia school also played Jhālā in talas like ektal, jhaptal, and rupak (Bandopadhyay Sanjoy).

6 During the researcher’s lessons in the year 2000, Pandit Sanjoy Bandopadhyay talked about eight significant possibilities of playing Jhālā, which can lead to myriad combinations according to the artist's creative ability. All these possibilities cover almost all the variety of Jhālā rendered by different musicians and these possibilities covered whatever the researcher found in this study.

On the recordings used in this study

The first audio reference where we find the *jhālā* is Imdad Khan's recording of Raag Behag in 1904⁷, which gives an idea of the *jhālā* played during the early 20th cent. These recordings include some of the reputed and distinguished concert performances like- the Dover Lane Music Conference, Sadarang Music Conference, ITC SRA Sammelan and Basant Bahaar Concert.

Limitations of Study



Although *jhālā* is an integral part of the recitals of all stringed and wind instruments, this study is confined to the *jhālā* on *sitār* and restricted to the direct descendants of *imadādakhānī gharānā* on the Vilayat Khan line. The investigation was carried out on 30 selected samples, commercial and concert recordings, as available through uploads on YouTube.

2. Methodology

The investigation initially identified 30 sample videos of Imdad Khan, Enayat Khan, Vilayat Khan, and Shujaat Khan from the YouTube repository on 15 November 2022. The search term was the artist's name with the YT filter "Relevance." At the second level, the researcher identified the pieces that included *Jhālā*.

The data covers 118 years, from 1904 to 2022, as referenced on YouTube. The data include the first recording of the *sitār*, the performance by Imdad Khan, and the latest performance by his great-grandson Shujaat Khan at the Dover Lane Music Conference 2022. The data set was as below:

Sn	Description	Qty.
1	Imdad Khan	04
2	Inayat Khan	06
3	Vilayat Khan (VK)	11

7 This gramophone record is uploaded by Reshmita Jha on YouTube which was recorded by William Sinkler Darby and his assistant Max Hampe in December 1904.

4	Shujaat Khan (SK)	09
	Total	30

These recordings were critically analyzed based on the technical aspects and the melodic expression incorporated in *Jhālā*. This study involves *Jhālā* followed by *ālāpa joḍ* and the concluding part of the concert played after the *rajākhānī* or *drut gat*.

3. Results

From the received data, it came to open that Inayat Khan carried forward all the *Jhālā* forms rendered by his father, Imdad Khan. These forms are in *sīdhā Jhālā*, *ulat Jhālā*, and left-hand ornamentations.

Studying the first two generations, Imdad Khan and Inayat Khan, the results were the following. Specifications for the bol-s are- (Da - D, Ra - R, Dir Dir - drdr)

A. In *sīdhā Jhālā*, the researchers observed the following patterns:

1. *sīdhā Jhālā* of 4+4+4+4 pattern
2. *sīdhā Jhālā* with 7 *Cikārī* strokes on each part [DCCCCC X 2]
3. *sīdhā Jhālā* (3+3+2)x2 pattern
4. *Sidha Jhālā* with drdrdr on the *Cikārī* [D-drdrdr, D-drdr D-drdr D-dr, and other combinations]



5. 5-swar *mīṃḍ*.

- B. In *ulat Jhālā*, the researchers observed only one pattern 4+4+4+4.
- C. Jod - *Jhālā* included *sīdhā Jhālā* only.
- D. The left-hand ornamentations
 - Application of *mīṃḍ* and the maximum was five-*svara mīṃḍ*.
 - Applications of plucking the first *tarab* string with the left hand during *Jhālā*.
 - Application of other embellishments like *kriṃtana*, *ghasīṭa*, *jamajamā*, *gamaka* etc.

Observations of the Third-Generation Vilayat Khan's samples are :

- A. All the forms and patterns executed by the first two generations were adopted.
- B. *Ulat Jhālā* variations.
- C. Jod- *Jhālā* started with *Ulat Jhālā*.
- D. Introduced *peśakār*

D-C-CDCC D-C-CDCC D-C-CDCC DC DC DC DC

- E. The left-hand ornamentations

Vilayat Khan's *Jhālā* is much more ornamental as compared to the first two generations.

Observations of the Fourth-Generation Shujaat Khan's samples are:

- A. Carried forward all the forms and variations from the previous generations.
- B. *Ulta Jhālā* variations DC
DDC DDC DDCC DDCC
DC DCC DCC DC DCC DCC DC DCCC
DC DCCC DC DC DC DC DCCC DCCC
DCCC
- C. Execution of *Ulta Jhālā* prominently in Jod.
- D. *peśakār* different patterns
DDC DDC DC DDC DDC DCD-C D-C DC
- E. The left-hand ornamentations:

Concluding *Jhālā* is simple with fewer ornamentations.

E. Analyzing the employed speed by the four musicians in *Jhālā* were:

Sn	Musician	Speed range in BPM
1.	Imdad Khan	400-470
2.	Inayat Khan	480-540
3.	Vilayat Khan	380-630
4.	Shujaat Khan	320-700



Distribution of Jhālā components among the four generations

Forms of Jhālā	First Generation	Second Generation	Third Generation	Fourth Generation
sīdhā jhālā				
4+4+4+4	✓	✓	✓	✓
7 cikārī strokes on each part [DCCCCC X 2]	✓	✓	✓	✓
(3+3+2)x2 pattern	✓	✓	✓	✓
drdrdr on the cikārī [D- drdrdr, D-drdr D-drdr D-dr, and other combinations]	✓	✓	✓	✓
ulṭā jhālā pattern	4+4+4+4	✓	✓	✓
4+4+4+4	✓	✓	✓	✓
DC DDC DDC , DCDCCDCCDCCDCC, DCDCCCDCCDCCD, DCDCDCCDCCDCCC	X	X	X	✓
peśakār				
D-C-CDCC	X	X	✓	✓
Other patterns	X	X	X	✓
joḍ- jhālā				
sīdhā jhālā	✓	✓	X	X
ulṭā jhālā	X	X	✓	✓
The left-hand ornamentations				
5-svara or lesser number of svara meend.	✓	✓	✓ ₈	✓ ₉
Plucking the first tarab string with the left hand during jhala.	X	✓	✓	✓
Other embellishments like krintan, gamak, ghasit, and Zamzama.	X	✓	✓	✓

6. Discussions



The basic structural form of the *jhālā* of 4+4+4+4 pattern and the variations formed with 2 and 3 to complete 8 or 16 matras, e.g., 3+3+2 or 3+3+3+3+4 flowed throughout all four generations. The identification of *kattar Jhālā* was difficult. It appears that the *sitār* players used to decide on the applications of *cikārī* and *baaj-ka-tar* to bring out the effects of *kat* based *pakhāvaj* phrases.

8 Vilayat Khan's Jhala is much more ornamental as compared to the first two generations

9 Concluding Jhala is simple with fewer ornamentations.

The first two generation's performances have good resemblances, and most of the second generation Inayat Khan's components have been carried forward. Inayat Khan used tarab-plucking in combination with *cikārī* during *jhālā* playing. This was a distinctive addition. Another noticeable difference was that Imdad Khan recorded *jhālā* between 400 to 470 bpm when Inayat Khan played between 480 to 540 bpm. So, there was a significant increase in speed in the second generation's *sitār* playing.

Vilayat Khan, the third-generation *sitār* player, brought significant changes in the playing style, techniques, and on instruments. He introduced '*peśakār*' as a distinct form of *jhālā* in the *joḍ* and *gat* renderings. This *peśakār* is adopted by most of the *sitār* players and modified in their ways. Vilayat Khan introduced this new pattern in *jhālā*, which can be considered a dummy Gat¹⁰ for rendering the *taan-s* with *jhālā* strokes. Another exceptional addition from VK is to establish the 4+4+4+4 and render the intricate melodic phrases with Jhālā. Apart from the typical forms, significant consideration is given to the improvisational part.

Chanda published the whole sequence of *jhālā*, which he claimed to be practiced by Inayat Khan as his daily Riyaz (30-43). After analyzing the 78rpm records and this published representation, this can be concluded that the forms of *jhālā* were the same as described by Chanda and other authors. However, an assessment of the improvisational aspects of Imdad Khan and Inayat Khan is not possible. For the first two generations, the actual picture of the *jhālā* execution cannot be assumed clearly as the available recordings are of very short duration.

Shujaat Khan maintains the integrity of *laya*, and reaches extreme heights without compromising the melody and simplicity of the renderings. He preferred a lower tempo as compared to the other three generations for *jhālā*. He tries to create an impact of rain when he starts (Khan 1:10:41). Although he uses the widest speed range amongst all the *sitār* players under the study. But, he uses lesser *mīmḍa* compared to his father, Vilayat Khan. SK uses additional *peśakāra* patterns using his artistry, and on artistic requirements, he also uses the VK pattern. The researcher found that SK prefers to perform longer duration *jhālā* than his predecessors.

10 According to Buddhadev Dasgupta, it was called *peśakāra*. (Bandopadhyay, Sanjoy)

7. Conclusion

The data reveals that some specific patterns of Jhālā flowed throughout all four generations. The components of *Jhālā* rendering by Imdad Khan were adopted by the successors of the following three generations. However, there were several new additions in terms of (a) new techniques of execution, (b) variations on the basic patterns, (c) application of new embellishments, and (d) changes in the *laya* range employed in *jhālā*. Vilayat Khan's contribution brought significant additions over his predecessors and profoundly impacted the next generation.



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