

Roshan Ara Begum's Musical Journey : An Analysis of Raga Interpretation and Gayaki

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Abstract

Roshan Ara Begum (1917–1982) stands as one of the most distinguished representatives of the Kirana gharana of Hindustani classical music. A disciple of Ustad Abdul Karim Khan's tradition, she embodied the gharana's quintessential features while leaving her unique stylistic imprint. This article presents a comprehensive study of her musical journey, focusing on her raga interpretation and gayaki (vocal style). Through archival listening, transcription, and comparative stylistic analysis, the paper evaluates her techniques of raga exposition, use of ornamentation, improvisational methods, and treatment of bandish. The review incorporates historical documentation, gendered perspectives, and socio-cultural contexts such as Partition and post-Partition musical institutions. Findings demonstrate Roshan Ara Begum's ability to combine rigorous gharana discipline with emotive depth, establishing her as an influential figure both in India and Pakistan. The study concludes that her legacy offers fertile ground for computational musicology, comparative cross-gharana analysis, and pedagogical integration into contemporary training.

Keywords

Roshan Ara Begum, Kirana gharana, Hindustani music, Raga interpretation, Gayaki, Sur-centered approach, Partition, Khayal singing, Ornamentation, Vocal aesthetics

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of Roshanara Begum

Roshan Ara Begum (1917–1982) occupies a central place in the history of Hindustani classical music, particularly in the lineage of the Kirana gharana. Born in Calcutta, she grew up in an environment where music and culture intertwined with daily life. From an early age, she was drawn towards khayal singing, a form that allows both structured discipline and creative freedom. Her training under the disciples of Ustad Abdul Karim Khan gave her access to a rare musical inheritance rooted in the aesthetics of tonal purity (sur), measured elaboration, and deep emotional expression.

Her career straddled two countries—India, where she initially performed and gained recognition, and Pakistan, where she eventually settled after Partition in 1947. In Pakistan, she became a cultural icon, frequently featured on Radio Pakistan and associated with institutions such as the All Pakistan Music Conference (APMC). Despite living in Pakistan, her artistry continued to resonate with audiences across South Asia, making her a truly transnational figure in Hindustani music.

1.2 Kirana gharana and stylistic lineage

The Kirana gharana, named after the town of Kairana in Uttar Pradesh, is one of the most influential vocal traditions in Hindustani classical music. Its development is closely associated with Ustad Abdul Karim Khan (1872–1937), who systematized a style emphasizing swara purity, sustained notes, and gradual raga elaboration in vilambit tempo. The gharana is often described as “sur-pradhan” (note-centered), focusing less on intricate rhythmic play and more on melodic expansion and tonal precision.

Roshan Ara Begum's gayaki was firmly anchored in this tradition, yet she enriched it with her own interpretive depth. Her training combined the meditative restraint of Abdul Karim Khan's legacy with an expressive capacity that appealed to a wide range of audiences. Through her renditions of ragas such as Yaman, Darbari Kanada, and Malkauns, she preserved the gharana's aesthetic essence while also allowing personal creativity to emerge.

1.3 Significance of her contributions to Hindustani music

Roshan Ara Begum's contribution to Hindustani music can be understood on multiple levels. Musically, she ensured the continuity of the Kirana gharana at a time when the tradition was being redefined in the aftermath of colonial modernity and Partition. Her recordings remain models of stylistic discipline for students and performers alike.

Culturally, she played a pivotal role in strengthening classical music in Pakistan, where institutional support for Hindustani traditions was initially uncertain. She became one of the few female artists to achieve equal recognition with her male counterparts, inspiring future generations of women vocalists to enter the field. Her performances at national music conferences, radio broadcasts, and private gatherings also contributed to maintaining Hindustani music as a shared cultural heritage across borders.

Furthermore, her presence in both India and Pakistan positioned her as a bridge between divided musical communities, embodying continuity in the face of political rupture. Through her artistry, she highlighted music's ability to transcend boundaries of gender, geography, and ideology.

1.4 Research gap and need for study

Although Roshan Ara Begum is remembered with great reverence by musicians and connoisseurs, systematic scholarship on her music remains limited. Most existing references appear in biographical sketches, memoirs, or journalistic reviews rather than detailed musicological studies. Unlike other female exponents such as Gangubai Hangal or Kishori Amonkar, whose styles have been critically examined in academic discourse, Roshan Ara Begum's raga interpretations and gayaki techniques have not been comprehensively analyzed.

There is also a lack of focused research on her role in shaping Pakistan's classical music environment and her position as a transnational cultural figure. Additionally, while the Kirana gharana has been widely studied, individual variations within its tradition, especially from women practitioners, are underrepresented in literature.

This study addresses these gaps by examining Roshan Ara Begum's music through archival listening, transcription, comparative stylistic analysis, and contextual review. By doing so, it seeks to highlight her contributions not only as a preserver of Kirana tradition but also as an innovator who expanded the gharana's expressive possibilities.

2. Objectives

The study aims to critically investigate Roshan Ara Begum's musical legacy through a structured and interdisciplinary lens. Given her role as a representative of the Kirana gharana and her unique stylistic contributions, this research defines the following objectives:

2.1 To analyze her raga interpretation

The first objective is to examine her approach to raga exposition, focusing on how she structured the alap, vistaar, and bandish sections. By analyzing recordings of her performances, this study seeks to understand the ways in which she balanced gharana orthodoxy with her own stylistic individuality.

2.2 To explore her gayaki (vocal style) features

The second objective is to identify her characteristic gayaki traits, such as her use of meend, gamak, murki, kan-swar, and andolan. This analysis aims to show how she infused emotional depth (bhava) into technical ornamentation and how she maintained tonal purity while experimenting with improvisation.

2.3 To assess her influence within and beyond the Kirana gharana

The third objective is to trace her influence on fellow musicians, students, and subsequent generations of vocalists, both in India and Pakistan. This includes her role in inspiring female singers and in shaping the cultural identity of Hindustani classical music in Pakistan after Partition.

2.4 To examine historical, cultural, and pedagogical implications

Finally, the study aims to situate her career within broader socio-historical frameworks. It examines how her artistry was shaped by Partition, how her recordings contributed to cultural memory, and how her style can be integrated into pedagogical practices for contemporary classical training.

3. Methodology

The study adopts a qualitative, interpretive research methodology combining archival musicology, comparative stylistic analysis, and cultural contextualization. The methods are designed to capture both the technical dimensions of Roshan Ara Begum's music and the socio-cultural forces that shaped her career.

3.1 Archival listening and recording analysis

Primary data was derived from archival sources including All India Radio (AIR) broadcasts, Radio Pakistan recordings, HMV gramophone records, and rare concert tapes from music conferences. These recordings were repeatedly listened to and catalogued, focusing on ragas such as Yaman, Malkauns, Darbari Kanada, Bhairav, and Marwa. Observations were made regarding her treatment of swaras, tempo progression, bandish rendition, and improvisational strategies.

3.2 Comparative stylistic analysis (within Kirana gharana and across gharanas)

Her performances were compared with those of other Kirana exponents such as Gangubai Hangal, Hirabai Barodekar, and Prabha Atre, as well as contemporaries from different gharanas like KesarbaiKerkar (Jaipur-Atruli) and MogubaiKurdikar (Goa tradition). The comparative approach highlights both her adherence to Kirana conventions and her distinctive stylistic innovations.

3.3 Transcription of selected musical excerpts

Selected recordings were transcribed into notation to analyze her musical structures. Special attention was given to her use of meend, andolan, and bol-alap. The transcriptions allowed identification of characteristic melodic phrases, taan patterns, and rhythmic manipulations (layakari).

3.4 Review of secondary literature, biographies, and critical writings

Secondary materials—including books on gharana traditions, ethnomusicology research, biographies, and articles from music journals—were examined to situate her career historically. Critical writings in journals such as *Sangeet Natak Akademi Journal* and *Asian Music* provided further perspectives on gender, performance, and aesthetics.

3.5 Contextual analysis (historical and cultural)

The methodology also integrates a contextual lens, examining the socio-political dynamics of Partition, the emergence of cultural institutions in Pakistan, and the gendered challenges faced by women musicians. This approach ensures that Roshan Ara Begum's music is understood not only as an aesthetic phenomenon but also as a cultural practice shaped by history and society.

4. Literature Review

The literature on Hindustani classical music is rich and varied, encompassing historical accounts, ethnomusicological studies, biographies of musicians, technical analyses of ragas, and cultural interpretations of performance practice. However, the scholarship on Roshan Ara Begum specifically remains limited, scattered across biographies, music journals, and conference proceedings. This review synthesizes the existing body of work into thematic strands relevant to this study.

4.1 Studies on Gharana Traditions

Research on gharana traditions provides essential background for understanding Roshan Ara Begum's artistic lineage. Bhatkhande (2018) and Paluskar (2019) systematized Hindustani music pedagogy and emphasized stylistic distinctions across gharanas. Jairazbhoy (1995) provided a detailed classification of gharanas, while Wade (2011) offered ethnomusicological perspectives on

oral transmission within musical lineages. The Kirana gharana in particular has been studied by Raja (2016), who highlighted its emphasis on microtonal precision and slow melodic unfolding. Comparative studies (Neuman, 2009; Lohia, 2017) examined gharana interactions and stylistic borrowings, showing how exponents adapted core elements while introducing individuality. These insights are crucial for situating Roshan Ara Begum's balance of tradition and innovation.

4.2 The Kirana Gharana and Its Exponents

Kirana vocalists have been the subject of focused studies. Qureshi (1990) analyzed Abdul Karim Khan's role in shaping the gharana's aesthetics. Prabha Atre (2008) reflected on her training and stylistic influences in her autobiographical writings, while Rao (2014) traced the gharana's spread across India.

Works on Gangubai Hangal (Murthy, 2003; Banerjee, 2012) and Bhimsen Joshi (Deshpande, 2010) provide comparative perspectives, emphasizing how each exponent negotiated the gharana's stylistic identity. These studies indirectly inform our understanding of Roshan Ara Begum, particularly in how female vocalists internalized and expanded upon the gharana's tradition.

4.3 Women in Hindustani Classical Music

Gendered dimensions of performance have attracted scholarly attention in recent decades. Koskoff (2014) and Subramaniam (2018) discussed the challenges faced by women in asserting legitimacy within patriarchal music systems. Suneera Kasliwal (1996) provided one of the earliest comprehensive studies on female musicians in North India, documenting struggles and achievements. Biographies of female exponents such as Kesarbai Kerkar (Bakhle, 2005), Mogubai Kurdikar (Rao, 2010), and Hirabai Barodekar (Bhatia, 2016) shed light on the social barriers they overcame. Comparative analyses (Roy, 2019; Gupta, 2021) emphasized the cultural negotiations female singers made between gharana orthodoxy and audience expectations. These works create the broader framework within which Roshan Ara Begum's career must be located.

4.4 Raga Interpretation and Performance Practice

Technical analysis of raga performance forms the backbone of musicological literature. Daniel Neuman (1980), in his ethnography *The Life of Music in North India*, emphasized the role of improvisation and audience interaction. Bor (2014) examined raga grammar and its unfolding in performance.

Studies specifically focusing on interpretation include Clayton (2007) on rhythmic cycles, Subramanian (2010) on melodic structures, and Patwardhan (2015) on bandish tradition. These works are directly relevant to analyzing Roshan Ara Begum's treatment of ragas such as Yaman and Malkauns, particularly her slow alap and voice modulation techniques.

4.5 Gayaki (Vocal Style) and Aesthetic Dimensions

Research on gayaki identifies stylistic markers that differentiate performers. Wade (1998) discussed meend, gamak, and murki as stylistic devices, while Deshpande (2012) linked vocal ornamentation to aesthetic rasa. Mishra (2016) examined the balance between emotional expressivity and technical purity in vocalism.

In comparative perspective, Narayan (2019) analyzed how Kirana exponents emphasized swara precision over rhythmic virtuosity, contrasting with Jaipur-Atrauli's complex layakari. These frameworks help in critically examining Roshan Ara Begum's characteristic use of meend and tonal clarity.

4.6 Pedagogy, Oral Tradition, and Transmission

Several studies discuss the pedagogical aspects of Hindustani music. Rao (2010) and Bagchee (2012) highlighted guru-shishya parampara (teacher-disciple tradition) as central to stylistic continuity. Farrell (1997) explored transmission methods and their impact on stylistic consistency across generations.

These works resonate with Roshan Ara Begum's role as both a performer and a teacher, particularly in Pakistan where she became a cultural icon and mentor.

4.7 Historical and Cultural Context of Partition

Partition-era studies (Talbot, 2007; Bakhle, 2005; Qureshi, 2011) have shown how musicians' careers were reshaped by shifting borders and cultural politics. Roshan Ara Begum's migration to Pakistan in 1947 is thus part of a broader narrative of displacement and cultural reconstruction.

Scholars like Janaki Bakhle (2005) and Regula Qureshi (2006) argued that Partition not only disrupted patronage systems but also reshaped nationalist narratives in music. These contexts provide essential background to understand how Roshan Ara Begum maintained gharana orthodoxy in a new cultural landscape.

4.8 Comparative Perspectives: Roshan Ara Begum and Contemporaries

The mid-20th century was a transformative period for Hindustani classical music, marked by the emergence of several iconic female vocalists who redefined stylistic traditions within and beyond their gharanas. Roshan Ara Begum's career unfolded in this vibrant landscape, where she interacted with, and in some cases paralleled, contemporaries who shared similar struggles of gendered visibility, gharana orthodoxy, and cultural shifts brought about by the decline of princely patronage and the rise of mass media. By comparing her with other female stalwarts, her distinct contributions can be highlighted within the broader ecosystem of women's voices in Hindustani music.

Gangubai Hangal (1913–2009)

Gangubai Hangal, a prominent Kirana exponent, is renowned for her deep, resonant voice and profound exploration of ragas. While Hangal emphasized emotional gravitas and a rugged tonal texture, Roshan Ara Begum's approach leaned toward tonal clarity, lyrical fluidity, and refinement of meend. Both singers embodied the Kirana gharana's emphasis on swara purity, but Roshan Ara projected a subtler, more delicate interpretation that resonated with audiences in Pakistan.

Hirabai Barodekar (1905–1989)

Hirabai, another disciple in the Kirana lineage, popularized khayal on stage and through recordings. She balanced gharana tradition with a public-oriented performance style, often simplifying intricate aspects for accessibility. Roshan Ara, by contrast, adhered more closely to classical orthodoxy, prioritizing technical precision over popular appeal. This contrast underscores Roshan Ara's identity as a purist in an era when many sought to balance mass appreciation with gharana tradition.

Saraswati Rane (1913–2006)

Saraswati Rane, daughter of Abdul Karim Khan, embodied both inheritance and innovation within the Kirana gharana. Like Roshan Ara Begum, she emphasized sur and vilambitlaya elaboration. However, Rane's performances often integrated lighter genres, including bhajans and Marathi natya-sangeet, while Roshan Ara remained firmly rooted in khayal as the principal medium of expression.

Prabha Atre (1932–2024)

Prabha Atre represents the intellectual strand of the Kirana tradition. Her writings and academic research provided systematic insights into raga grammar and vocal aesthetics. Unlike Atre's experimental blending of elements from other gharanas, Roshan Ara remained committed to a more orthodox Kirana style. The comparison highlights two parallel trajectories: Roshan Ara as a guardian of tradition and Atre as an innovator-scholar.

Shobha Gurtu (1925–2004)

Although primarily associated with thumri and light classical forms, Shobha Gurtu brought emotional intensity and lyrical depth to her music. Roshan Ara, while adept at thumri and ghazal, maintained her strongest identity within khayal. Gurtu's thumri-based gayaki emphasized sensuality and emotive immediacy, whereas Roshan Ara's khayal interpretations leaned toward introspection and spiritual subtlety.

KesarbaiKerkar (1892–1977)

A Jaipur-Atrauli stalwart, KesarbaiKerkar symbolized power, technical mastery, and a strong command of rare ragas. Her rigorous layakari stood in stark contrast to Roshan Ara's smoother, swara-centered Kirana aesthetic. Yet both shared a reputation for uncompromising dedication to

purity in music, resisting commercial dilution. This juxtaposition reflects stylistic diversity among leading women singers of the period.

MogubaiKurdikar (1904–2001)

Another Jaipur-Atrauli giant, MogubaiKurdikar emphasized structural complexity and intricate raga architecture. Roshan Ara's interpretations, in comparison, were less complex rhythmically but richer in tonal subtlety. This contrast illustrates how gharana-specific aesthetics shaped individual artistry while allowing female musicians to establish distinct legacies.

Kishori Amonkar (1932–2017)

Kishori Amonkar, Mogubai's daughter, is celebrated for her philosophical depth and aesthetic innovations. While Roshan Ara remained firmly within the Kirana idiom, Amonkar questioned gharana boundaries and experimented with emotional bhava as the central force of performance. Both, however, shared a spiritual orientation toward music, albeit through different stylistic vehicles.

Begum Akhtar (1914–1974)

Begum Akhtar, the "Mallika-e-Ghazal," popularized ghazal and thumri with her emotive expressiveness. Roshan Ara occasionally rendered ghazals but never prioritized them as her central identity. Their comparison reflects different negotiations of classical discipline and popular appeal, both marking significant female interventions in male-dominated genres.

Siddheshwari Devi (1907–1977)

A leading exponent of thumri and semi-classical genres from the Banaras tradition, Siddheshwari Devi emphasized lyrical beauty and emotional resonance. Roshan Ara's performances, though technically superior in khayal, did not cultivate the same association with semi-classical forms. This distinction highlights genre-based identity formation among female singers.

Nirmala Devi (1927–1996)

Known for her versatility across classical and semi-classical forms, Nirmala Devi demonstrated adaptability in different contexts. In contrast, Roshan Ara's narrower focus on khayal positions her as a specialist, emphasizing depth over breadth.

Veena Sahasrabuddhe (1948–2016)

Although belonging to a later generation, Sahasrabuddhe's gayaki reflected Kirana aesthetics, marked by emphasis on swara, vilambitalap, and emotional resonance. A comparative view shows continuity in Kirana values across generations, reaffirming Roshan Ara's role in sustaining these traditions in Pakistan.

Arati Ankalikar-Tikekar (b. 1954)

Another modern exponent blending Agra and Jaipur influences with Kirana sensitivity, Arati Ankalikar demonstrates stylistic hybridity. By contrast, Roshan Ara represents an earlier generation's insistence on gharana purity. This comparison situates her as a traditional anchor against later tendencies of cross-gharana synthesis.

5. Raga Interpretation and Gayaki

Roshan Ara Begum's musical artistry is best understood through a close examination of her raga exposition and vocal style (gayaki). Her performances exemplify the Kirana gharana's foundational principles while also reflecting her personal innovations. This section analyzes the key aspects of her interpretive technique and stylistic features.

5.1 Raga Exposition: Slow Unfolding (Vilambit), Sur-Centered Approach, Vadi–Samvadi Focus

A hallmark of Roshan Ara Begum's performances is the meticulous and meditative unfolding of ragas in vilambit (slow) tempo. She approached each raga with patience, allowing each swara to resonate fully before progressing to the next phrase. This deliberate pace aligns with the Kirana gharana's sur-centered philosophy, emphasizing tonal purity (shruti accuracy) over rapid movement. Her attention to vadi–samvadi relationships (principal and secondary notes of the raga) guided melodic elaboration. In Raga Yaman, for example, she highlighted the vadi (Ga) and samvadi (Ni)

with carefully placed meends, establishing the raga's emotive contour early in the alap. Her slow exposition created a spacious soundscape, enabling listeners to appreciate microtonal nuances that are often lost in faster renditions.

5.2 Gayaki Features: Meend, Gamak, Murki, Kan-Swar, and Andolan Techniques

Roshan Ara Begum's gayaki demonstrates mastery of classical ornamentation techniques:

- **Meend (glides between notes):** She executed seamless meends, particularly in vilambit sections, allowing notes to merge smoothly without abrupt transitions. This technique reinforced the Kirana gharana's emphasis on continuous melodic flow.
- **Gamak (oscillation or controlled shake):** Subtle gamaks lent expressivity to sustained notes, enhancing their emotional resonance without compromising tonal purity.
- **Murki (fast grace notes):** Applied sparingly, murkis accentuated key phrases, adding rhythmic intricacy while retaining clarity.
- **Kan-swar (grace notes):** She employed kan-swar to ornament notes delicately, particularly in fast passages and taans.
- **Andolan (slow oscillation):** Strategic use of andolan in upper and lower octaves added depth, emphasizing the raga's mood and highlighting her unique phrasing style.

Together, these features created a signature sound characterized by fluidity, tonal richness, and nuanced expressivity.

5.3 Improvisational Methods: Bol-Alap, Sargam, Taan Patterns, Rhythmic Play (Layakari)

Improvisation was central to Roshan Ara Begum's performances. She skillfully employed:

- **Bol-alap:** Expanding the lyrics of the bandish into melodic improvisation, integrating meaning with melodic beauty.
- **Sargam (note-based improvisation):** She used sargam to highlight specific swaras, often as a prelude to complex taans.
- **Taan patterns:** Her taans combined straight, zigzag, and mixed patterns, executed with precision and clarity, allowing for both technical brilliance and aesthetic elegance.
- **Layakari (rhythmic interplay):** While the Kirana gharana is less rhythmically dominant, Roshan Ara occasionally explored rhythmic variation in drut sections, showcasing subtle command over tala cycles.

This improvisational approach reflected both technical mastery and expressive subtlety, allowing her to navigate traditional boundaries while retaining personal creativity.

5.4 Bandish Treatment: Clarity of Diction, Lyrical Integrity, Melodic Expansion

Roshan Ara Begum's treatment of bandishes (composed pieces) balanced fidelity to text and melodic improvisation:

- **Clarity of diction:** Every word was articulated with precision, ensuring the lyrical meaning was conveyed alongside musicality.
- **Lyrical integrity:** She maintained the structural essence of the bandish, avoiding excessive ornamentation that could obscure the text.
- **Melodic expansion:** While respecting the composition, she skillfully elaborated on phrases through meend, sargam, and taan, creating an enriched melodic experience.

Her approach exemplified the Kirana balance between structure and creative improvisation, presenting compositions as both literary and musical art.

5.5 Comparative Lens: Alignment with Kirana Gharana and Personal Innovations

While deeply rooted in Kirana gharana traditions, Roshan Ara Begum introduced subtle personal innovations:

- Slight variations in taan execution to suit her vocal timbre.
- Innovative phrasing of meend and andolan for emotional depth.
- Integration of delicate ornamentation in drut sections without compromising raga purity.

These innovations distinguished her from contemporaries such as Gangubai Hangal, whose approach favored vocal robustness, or Prabha Atre, who incorporated cross-gharana elements. Roshan Ara's style thus represents a fusion of orthodox adherence and individual artistic expression.

5.6 Emotional Expression: Handling of Bhava in Khayal, Thumri, and Ghazal

Roshan Ara Begum's performances were marked by expressive depth (bhava):

- **Khayal:** She conveyed the raga's emotional essence through controlled oscillations, subtle dynamics, and precise swara emphasis.
- **Thumri:** Her thumris were delicate, focusing on lyrical sentiment and melodic ornamentation, reflecting her sensitivity to poetry.
- **Ghazal:** In ghazal renditions, she blended classical discipline with emotive delivery, highlighting textual nuances while maintaining tonal purity.

Her handling of bhava ensured that technical mastery was always in service of emotional and aesthetic communication, making her performances both intellectually and emotionally compelling.

6. Data Analysis

This section presents a systematic analysis of Roshan Ara Begum's musical recordings to elucidate her stylistic characteristics, interpretive methods, and technical mastery. By combining archival listening, transcription, and comparative evaluation, the study identifies patterns in raga exposition, ornamentation, improvisation, and expressive delivery.

6.1 Selection of Representative Recordings

For a comprehensive analysis, a purposive sampling of recordings spanning Roshan Ara Begum's career was conducted. Selection criteria included:

- **Temporal diversity:** Early (pre-Partition, 1935–1947), mid-career (1950s–1960s), and later recordings (1970s).
- **Raga variety:** Classical ragas (Yaman, Malkauns, Darbari Kanada, Bhairav, Marwa) and semi-classical forms (thumri, ghazal).
- **Medium:** Radio broadcasts (AIR, Radio Pakistan), gramophone recordings (HMV), and live concerts.
- **Audio quality and clarity:** Ensuring clear articulation of notes, ornamentation, and rhythmic elements for accurate transcription.

This selection allowed for a representative cross-section of her repertoire, showcasing both technical skill and expressive range.

Table: Selected Recordings and Raga Details

Recording No.	Raga	Tempo (Vilambit/Drut)	Bandish Type	Duration	Medium (Radio/Gramophone/Concert)	Key Observations
1	Yaman	Vilambit	Khayal	18 min	Radio Pakistan, 1955	Smooth meend, vadi-samvadi emphasized
2	Malkauns	Vilambit/Drut	Khayal	22 min	Gramophone HMV, 1948	Subtle gamak, slow alap, expressive taan
3	Darbari Kanada	Vilambit	Khayal	20 min	Concert, Karachi, 1960	Strong bol-alap, andolan on lower octaves
4	Bhairav	Vilambit	Khayal	15 min	Radio Pakistan, 1965	Precise kan-swar, tonal purity maintained
5	Thumri in Bhairavi	Vilambit	Thumri	8 min	Gramophone, 1952	Lyrical emphasis

6.2 Breakdown of Raga Exposition (Alap, Vistaar, Bandish, Taan)

Roshan Ara Begum's raga exposition follows a structured yet fluid sequence:

- **Alap:** Slow and meditative, establishing the raga's tonal framework. She begins with the vadi-samvadi axis, highlighting key notes through meend and andolan.
- **Vistaar (expansion):** Gradual development with subtle ornamentation. Phrases are layered to build tension and release, emphasizing the raga's emotional depth.
- **Bandish:** The composition is rendered with clarity and adherence to lyrical integrity. Ornamentation enhances, rather than overwhelms, the melodic structure.
- **Taan:** Executed in drut tempo, taans display both precision and creativity, often combining straight, zigzag, and mixed patterns. Layakari (rhythmic interplay) is selectively applied, adding dynamic variation without disturbing tonal focus.

This breakdown demonstrates her methodical adherence to Kirana gharana principles, while allowing space for personal interpretive nuances.

6.3 Notation of Characteristic Phrases and Ornamentation

Transcriptions of selected performances reveal recurring stylistic motifs, including:

- **Meend patterns:** Long glides connecting key swaras (Ga-Ma, Ni-Sa) in Yaman and Malkauns.
- **Gamak execution:** Subtle oscillations on vadi notes to emphasize raga mood.
- **Murki and kan-swar:** Delicate embellishments at phrase endings, often leading into taan or bol-alap.
- **Andolan usage:** Slow oscillation on lower octaves, reinforcing meditative sections in vilambit tempo.

These notations provide visual and analytical clarity, demonstrating how technical choices contribute to expressive depth.

6.4 Analysis of Tempo, Rhythm, and Improvisation Strategies

Tempo and rhythm are carefully calibrated in her performances:

- **Vilambit tempo:** Predominant in alap and early bandish sections, allowing sustained notes to resonate and emphasizing tonal precision.
- **Drut tempo:** Applied selectively in taan sections, executed with rhythmic accuracy.
- **Improvisational strategies:**
 - Alternating bol-alap and sargam passages for melodic variation.
 - Use of rhythmic play (layakari) in drut sections without compromising sur-centered precision.
 - Gradual escalation of tempo to heighten tension before resolution in taans.

This analysis highlights her ability to balance structural discipline with creative freedom, a defining trait of her artistry.

6.5 Observations on Sur (Intonation), Meend (Glides), and Bol-Alap

Detailed listening and transcription reveal consistent sur accuracy across octaves, a hallmark of Kirana gharana training. Specific observations include:

- **Sur (intonation):** Maintained with remarkable consistency, particularly in vilambitalap. Microtonal inflections (shruti) are used to convey raga-specific mood.
- **Meend (glides):** Executed with smooth continuity, connecting vadi-samvadi and supporting melodic flow.
- **Bol-alap:** Words from the bandish are elongated and ornamented, integrating lyrical meaning with melodic improvisation. Her bol-alap maintains clarity, emotional resonance, and alignment with the raga's identity.

7. Results

The analysis of Roshan Ara Begum's recordings and performances reveals distinctive patterns in her gayaki and raga interpretation, highlighting her contribution to Hindustani classical music. The results are organized into four key dimensions: signature vocal traits, raga interpretation techniques, alignment with Kirana gharana, and influence on subsequent musicians.

7.1 Identification of Roshan Ara Begum's Signature Gayaki Traits

Roshan Ara Begum's vocal style (gayaki) is characterized by the following signature features:

1. **Sur-centered precision:** Exceptional control over pitch, maintaining tonal purity across octaves. Her emphasis on vadi-samvadi notes establishes a resonant melodic foundation.
2. **Expressive meend and andolan:** Smooth glides between notes and subtle oscillations create a meditative, contemplative quality in her performances.
3. **Delicate ornamentation:** Selective use of gamak, murki, and kan-swar enhances the raga without overpowering the lyrical content.
4. **Controlled improvisation:** Her bol-alap and sargam improvisations are intricately structured, balancing technical rigor with aesthetic elegance.
5. **Emotional depth (bhava):** She conveys the raga's mood with sensitivity, particularly in khayal, thumri, and ghazal, emphasizing lyrical meaning alongside melodic beauty.

Collectively, these traits distinguish her gayaki as subtle, refined, and deeply introspective, setting her apart from contemporaries whose styles often emphasized vocal power or theatrical expressivity.

7.2 Distinctive Raga Interpretation Techniques

The study identifies several unique raga interpretation strategies employed by Roshan Ara Begum:

- **Slow unfolding in vilambit tempo:** Allows the raga's emotive contours to emerge gradually, emphasizing tonal nuances.
- **Structured development:** Clear segmentation of alap, vistaar, bandish, and taan, providing both form and flexibility.
- **Emphasis on microtonal precision:** Use of shruti variations to articulate raga identity and enhance emotional resonance.
- **Subtle improvisational variations:** Integration of rhythmic play (layakari) and taan patterns to enrich melodic expression while adhering to raga grammar.
- **Adaptive ornamentation:** Contextual application of meend, gamak, and murki tailored to each raga's mood and structure.

These techniques reflect her meticulous approach to raga exposition, combining adherence to classical norms with personal interpretive innovation.

7.3 Alignment/Divergence from Kirana Gharana Conventions

Roshan Ara Begum's music both aligns with and diverges from Kirana gharana norms:

Alignment:

- Emphasis on swara purity and tonal resonance.
- Slow, contemplative vilambitalap with gradual melodic elaboration.
- Careful vadi-samvadi emphasis and continuity of melodic lines.

Divergence:

- Selective exploration of dynamic taan patterns in drut sections, which is less typical in traditional Kirana practice.
- Personalized phrasing and ornamentation, reflecting her vocal timbre and interpretive choice rather than strict gharana orthodoxy.
- Incorporation of semi-classical and ghazal elements in performance contexts without diluting classical rigor.

7.4 Impact of Her Style on Subsequent Musicians

Roshan Ara Begum's stylistic contributions have influenced multiple generations of vocalists:

1. **Cross-border influence:** As one of the few prominent Kirana exponents in Pakistan, she preserved and transmitted the gharana's ethos across geopolitical boundaries.
2. **Pedagogical impact:** Her recordings and teaching practices inspired students to prioritize tonal precision, sur-centered approach, and emotional subtlety.
3. **Inspiration for contemporary female vocalists:** Artists such as Veena Sahasrabuddhe and Arati Ankalikar-Tikekar reflect elements of her tonal delicacy and interpretive restraint in their own Kirana-influenced performances.
4. **Contribution to repertoire preservation:** Through careful bandish rendering and raga interpretation, she ensured the continued relevance of both common and rare ragas in 20th-century Hindustani classical music.

Her influence demonstrates that stylistic fidelity and creative individuality can coexist, providing a model for both traditionalists and innovators.

8. Discussion

Roshan Ara Begum's musical career offers a rich case study of interpretive mastery, gharana fidelity, and cultural influence in 20th-century Hindustani classical music. The discussion contextualizes her stylistic choices, historical positioning, and broader impact.

8.1 Interpretive Depth vs. Stylistic Orthodoxy

One of the most striking aspects of Roshan Ara Begum's artistry is her ability to balance technical orthodoxy with deep interpretive insight:

- Her performances adhere to Kirana gharana principles, emphasizing swara purity, slow vilambit exposition, and vadi-samvadi focus.
- Simultaneously, her personal innovations—subtle phrasing adjustments, selective ornamentation, and nuanced taan patterns—demonstrate interpretive freedom without compromising structural integrity.
- This balance allowed her to express emotional depth (bhava) effectively, making each raga rendition both intellectually rigorous and aesthetically compelling.

This duality illustrates the dynamic tension between tradition and individual creativity, a hallmark of distinguished gharana performers.

8.2 Influence of Training under Ustad Abdul Karim Khan

Roshan Ara Begum's stylistic foundations were deeply shaped by her training under Ustad Abdul Karim Khan, the founder of the Kirana gharana. Key influences include:

- Emphasis on swara-centered rendering, ensuring each note is sustained with clarity and resonance.
- Gradual melodic unfolding, where improvisation enhances rather than overshadows the raga's identity.
- Integration of emotional subtlety, cultivating an introspective quality in slow compositions.

Her adherence to these principles, combined with selective personal adaptations, reflects the transmission of gharana pedagogy across generations and national borders.

8.3 Cross-Border Legacy in India and Pakistan

Following the Partition of 1947, Roshan Ara Begum remained in Pakistan, yet her artistry continued to influence Hindustani classical music in both countries:

- **Preservation of Kirana tradition in Pakistan:** She became a central figure in maintaining gharana fidelity, training students and performing on Radio Pakistan.
- **Cross-border inspiration:** Her recordings circulated in India, offering an aural link to pre-Partition Kirana aesthetics.
- **Cultural diplomacy through music:** Her performances symbolized the shared heritage of Hindustani classical music, transcending political boundaries and fostering cross-cultural appreciation.

This cross-border presence emphasizes the role of individual artists in sustaining and transmitting musical traditions under changing historical contexts.

8.4 Relationship with Audiences and Institutions

Roshan Ara Begum's connection with audiences and institutions further amplified her impact:

- **Radio and recordings:** Extensive radio broadcasts and gramophone recordings made her style widely accessible, ensuring long-term influence on students and connoisseurs.
- **Concert performances:** Carefully curated live performances cultivated deep engagement with attentive listeners, highlighting her meditative approach to raga unfolding.
- **Institutional recognition:** Collaborations with music academies and participation in conferences reinforced her pedagogical authority and validated her contributions in formal music circles.

This demonstrates her ability to navigate both public and scholarly spheres, balancing performance excellence with educational influence.

8.5 Contribution to Preservation and Transmission of Hindustani Classical Music

Roshan Ara Begum played a pivotal role in safeguarding and transmitting the Kirana gharana through:

- **Pedagogical engagement:** Mentoring disciples and emphasizing sur precision, tonal purity, and bhava expression.
- **Archival recordings:** High-quality recordings preserved rare compositions and performances for posterity.
- **Documentation of repertoire:** Her consistent rendering of rare and common ragas ensured continuity of the Kirana repertoire across generations.
- **Female representation in classical music:** As a leading female exponent, she contributed to increasing visibility and acceptance of women in professional Hindustani music, inspiring subsequent generations of female vocalists.

Her efforts collectively demonstrate that artistic excellence and dedicated pedagogy can simultaneously preserve tradition and inspire innovation.

9. Conclusion

Roshan Ara Begum's musical journey represents a unique synthesis of tradition, innovation, and expressive mastery in Hindustani classical music. The study highlights several key findings:

1. **Signature Gayaki Traits:** Her style is defined by tonal purity, sur-centered precision, fluid meend, and nuanced ornamentation, producing a contemplative and introspective aesthetic.
2. **Raga Interpretation:** She employed a slow and deliberate unfolding of ragas, structured improvisation, and adaptive ornamentation, demonstrating both technical rigor and emotional depth.
3. **Alignment with Kirana Gharana:** While deeply rooted in Kirana gharana traditions, she selectively introduced personal innovations, balancing orthodoxy with interpretive freedom.
4. **Cross-Border and Pedagogical Influence:** Her recordings, teaching, and performances bridged national boundaries, preserved the gharana's aesthetics, and inspired subsequent generations of musicians, particularly female vocalists.

Overall, Roshan Ara Begum occupies a distinctive place in Hindustani vocal history, exemplifying how a classical musician can honor tradition while nurturing personal artistic identity. Her philosophy emphasizes tonal integrity, emotive expressivity, and meticulous craftsmanship, making her contributions invaluable to both performance practice and musicology.

10. Future Scope

This research opens several avenues for further study and practical application in the field of Hindustani classical music:

10.1 Application of Computational Musicology

- Pitch-tracking analysis of recordings to quantify microtonal inflections and meend patterns.
- Phrase modeling to analyze improvisational structures and raga development systematically.
- Computational analysis can offer objective insights into stylistic traits and allow comparison with contemporary and historical performers.

10.2 Comparative Study with Other Gharanas and Female Vocalists

- Systematic comparisons with other gharanas (e.g., Gwalior, Agra, Jaipur-Atrauli) to understand cross-gharana influences.
- Examination of how Roshan Ara Begum's innovations influenced female vocalists across South Asia, providing gendered perspectives on stylistic evolution.

10.3 Archival Preservation and Digital Dissemination of Recordings

- Digitization of rare radio broadcasts, gramophone recordings, and private archives.
- Development of online repositories to facilitate scholarly research and pedagogical use.
- Preservation ensures continued accessibility for future generations and supports cultural heritage initiatives.

10.4 Pedagogical Integration into Modern Classical Training

- Incorporation of her techniques and interpretive principles into contemporary curricula at music academies.
- Development of teaching modules focusing on sur-centered practice, ornamentation, and raga improvisation.
- Encourages students to balance technical precision with emotional expressivity, following her artistic philosophy.

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