

## ***Padmabhushan***

### ***Ustad Ahmad Jan Thirakwa***

#### ***My Guru***

***My whole life is an endeavour to live up to the ideals of my Guruji. He personified an entire era of tabla. Wherever Tabla is thought of, the name Ahmadjan Tirakwa stands at the forefront.***

***He was born in a musician's family of moradabad in the year 1891. he learnt Sarangi and singing until he was nine years old. His father then recognized that his ability was best suited to Tabla. So he was sent to Bombay to study Tabla at the feet of great Ustad munir Khan. After spending a few years studying the basics he went underground for seven years 'Vrat', practicing 18 hours a day under the guidance of Ustad Munir Khan. His elder brother assisted him in his 'Vrat'.***

***After this period of 'sadhana' he made an explosive debut at Bombay. News of Ahmadjan Thirakwa spread like a wild fire throughout India. At that time Tabla was merely an incidental to a main artist's performance.***

#### ***New Dimensions***

***Thirakwa Saheb introduced new dimension to Tabla playing and created inexhaustible horizons for Tabla players to aspire to. He showed that Tabla can stand on its own as a solo instrument.***

***Soon after this he became associated with famous Natak Mandali of Pt. Bal Gandharva. They performed to packed houses; the majority came to listen to the great Ustad Ahmadjan Thirakwa.***

***During his tours with the Natak Mandali he came into contact with Tabla players of various styles & Gharanas. He continued learning from each one until he became himself an authority in the four 'Bajs' of Tabla; delhi, Farrukhabad, Ajrada and Lucknow.***

***By the age of forty he became an ideal which every Tabla players aspire to. He was perfect in solo and in accompaniment.***

***Thiralwa Saheb altogether gave a new dimension to the solo presentation of Tabla. He gave it a sequence just as a singer or a sitarist would develop a Raga.***

### ***Personality***

***He was also wrestler, with a well-built-body. Always well dressed and with perfect manners, wherever he moved, he created an aura of majesty by his superb personality. Whenever he appeared on stage he invariably created a relaxed and easy atmosphere by his good sense of humor.***

***He was a God fearing man who endeavored to do his five 'namaz' each day. One of his prayer was that he should play Tabla every day until he died. His wish was granted; he gave his last performance on the 13th Jan 1975, the day he died.***

***On the death of this great man, Pt. Kishan Maharaj another great Tabla player of Varanasi said in this Television Interview, "with the death of Thirakwa the Sun of Tabla is now set....."***

***A historian wrote, "It well takes another five centuries to produce another such personality in the field of Tabla". Ustad Ahamadjan Thirakwa outlived many of his contemporaries, remaining on the stage more than sixty years, unparalleled in the field of Tabla.***

***It was in the year 1959, when he joined Bhatkhande Sangit Mahavidyalaya of Lucknow, as Head of the Department of***

***percussions. I became his disciple. Since my childhood it was my dream that came true.***

***I learned and practiced ceaselessly at his feet for more than fifteen years. I collected immense material in the various styles of Tabla playing. This book is a result of my efforts to disseminate some knowledge among the inquisitive students of Tabla world.***

### ***Brief Introduction to Tabla***

***Tabla is an important percussion instrument of Indian Music. It is one of the most developed Tal-keeping drum. It is a combined name for Tabla and Dagma. Tabla is played by right hand and dagma with left hand.***

***Tabla is essentially an accompanying instrument to Vocal, Instrumental and Dance. It has gained so much popularity these days that Solo performance on Tabla is also upheld in almost every music conference. For its refined tonal quality and intricate rhythmic affect it has come in the forefront, leaving behind all other drums like Pakhawaj, Dholak and Naal etc.***

***History of Tabla is not that old as compared to Pakhawaj or Mridang. With the advent of Khayal and Thumri singing in the 16th century this drum got popularity.***

***There is a lot of controversy about the origin of Tabla. But it is generally accepted that the first known great Tabla Wizard was Ustad Siddhar Khan of Delhi.***

***It is Delhi Gharana of Tabla whose branches flourished in Ajrada, Lucknow, Farrukhabad and Banaras. Generations of Guru-Sishya parampara developed different styles of Tabla playing and various Gharanas came into existence. In Punjab, this are remained uninfluenced by Delhi Gharana. Punjab Gharana of Tabla is distinct and there we find independent lineage. Following are the six Gharanas of Tabla playing.***

1. **Delhi Gharana**
2. **Ajarada Gharana**
3. **Lucknow Gharana**
4. **Farrukhabad Gharana**
5. **Banaras Gharana**
6. **Punjab Gharana**

### **Delhi Gharana**

**Majority of the Scholars believe that Delhi is the birth place of the Tabla.**

**Mogal Courts were the place for musicians to survive and as such, it is said that**

**Siddhar Khan was the first acknowledge great Tabla master who established the Delhi Gharana. Tabla became popular because of its soft melodic sound syllables which were more be-fitting in Khayal & Thumri style of singing. Mridanga or Pakhawaj which was prominent Taal Vadya for centuries, disappeared from the scene and Tabla captured the whole sphere of accompaniment to Vocal Instrumental and Dance also. In delhi Gharana Usthad Bugrah Khan, Usthad Sitab Khan, Bade Kale Khan, Usthad Naththu Khan are few names who contributed the style of this limege. These Usthads specialized Chanti ka Baj and gave maximum emphasis to PESKARA KAIDA & RELA, small GAT and soft MUKHRE and MUHRE are more prevent in Delhi Baj. Usthad Inam Ali Khan son of great Usthad Grami Khan is the living representative of this Gharana.**

### **Ajarada Gharana**

**Ajarada is the name of a village of district Meruit where a branch of Delhi**

**Gharana was established by Usthad Kalu Khan and Miru Khan. These two brothers were the disciples of Usthad Sidhdhar Khan of**

***Delhi. Usthad Chand Khan, Usthad Kale Khan, Usthad Shammu Khan and Usthad habibuddin Khan are the few names who enriched this branch of Delhi with there supperel innovations. Ajarada Baj is much similar to Delhi Baj yet distinct for its different treatment of the composition. Ajarada style of Tabla playing is more attractive because the emphasis of the Banya Bol, complex Layakaries and phrases of combined Bols like 'Ghetak' 'Ding Dina Gina and Dha ghe ge Nak Dhina'. Ajarada is also famous for Tishra jati Kaida & Gat Kaidas.***

### ***Lucknow Gharana***

***Usthad Modu Khan and Usthad Bakshu Khan established Lucknow Gharana of Tabla. On the request of the Nawab of Lucknow Usthad Modu Khan came to Lucknow from Delhi. In the 19th century Lucknow became the cultural centre and eminent musicians of the time got patronage by Lucknow Nawabs. Are of Tabla playing in Lucknow developed with Kathak Dance and with the result new dimensions were given to the language of Tabla. Usthad Mohamad Khan, Usthad Munne Khan, Usthad Abid Hussain Khan contributed so much to this style of Tabla playing that it became entirely different to the Delhi style. PARANS, GAT, TUKADA and loud composition got prominency in this style of Tabla playing with more and more association with the Kathak dance Lucknow Tabla also developed LAGGI KA BAJ, Usthad Wajid Hussain Khan & his son Usthad Affsq Hussain Khan were the last great exponent of this Gharana. Ilmas Hussain Khan Son of Usthad Affaq is the present representative of this Gharana.***

### ***Farukhabad Gharana***

***Haji Villayat Ali Khan established this Gharana. He was married to the daughter of Usthad Bakshu Khan of Lucknow Gharana. It is said Farukhabad Gharana is a branch of Lucknow Gharana. Usthad Salari Khan, Usthad Imam Baksh, Usthad Munir Khan are few names whose innovation in the art Tabla playing gave***

***recognition to this Gharana. Usthad Ahamad jan Thirakwa, Usthad Masit Khan and his son Karamat Hussain Khan became the Tabla wizards of 20th***

***Century. It is said that the Farukhabad style of Tabla playing is the essence of***

***Delhi, Lucknow, Ajarada Gharana. farukabad style is the expertise of 'Chanti' 'Lab' and 'Syahi Bols'. Beautiful GAT, CHALAN, REKA & RAU get prominence in this style. Usthad Ahamad jan Thirakwa added much popularity to Farukabad style of Tabla playing. He evolved a fresh and new system of Tabla solo playing out of his inexostable reservoir of compositions. In Farukabad style Tabla playing is a combined expression of soft and robust phrases. Special composition of Dhir Dhir Kit Tak and RELAS of Siyahi Bols.***

### ***Banaras Gharana***

***Pt. Ram Sahai disciple of Usthad modu Khan of Lucknow established the Banaras Gharana of Tabla playing. Banaras has been a cery old traditional cultural seat of U.P. Pt. Ram Sahai belonged to a family of musicians Kathak Dancers & Sarangi players. His family had rich heritage of music from his ancestors. Pt. Bhiron Sahai, Pt. Durga Sahai, Kanthe Maharaj, Sannta Ptassad, Anokhe Lal became famous Tabla wizards of the centaury. These Tabla exponents gave altogether new dimension to the art of Tabla playing. They included the all phrases and composition of other percussion instrument like Pakhawaj, Dholak, Tasha, Nagara and khol etc. and also gave emphasis to poetry Chhand and Kavitta in Tabla playing Dev-stuti and Kathak dance composition get more prominency in the solo playing of this style. Banaras has produced a number of great Tabla players internationally acknowledged. Banaras Baj has very wide range of phrases & composition. It is very forceful loud and robust style of Tabla playing. GATS, CHHAND & PARAN LAGGI & LADI are the main features of thei Baj.***

## ***Punjab Gharana***

***Punjab Gharana of Tabla is the only Gharana which is independent and has no bound with Delhi Gharana. It can be said that it is the most ancient Tabla Gharana. Lala Bhavani Das is the pioneer maestro of Punjab Gharana. He invented a new Baj on DUKKAD, a folk instrument which has both shells made of wood and on the left (Banya) they use flour dough. Their style of playing is much nearer to Pakhawaj playing. Kadir Baksh, Fakir Baksh, Miya Hussain Bakshi, Karam Illahi are the prominent name of this Gharana. In the modern time Usthad Alla Rakha & his son Zakhir Hussain is the representative of this Gharana. Because of the Pakhawaj's strong influence on this Gharana their playing is bit vigorously forceful and open and use of forefingers of the right hand is excessively prominent. Combination of Layakari is intricate and long compositions are used. Bandish and compositions of Punjab Gharana have evidence of their language and their peculiar pronunciation. Instead of KAIDA they give importance to GAT & RELA that too with very difficult and loaded layakaries. The skilful handling of Meend on Baya is the specialties of Punjab Gharana. Force & speed is important in this style.***