

## **Ustad Vilayat Khan: The orthodox revolutionary**

**By Deepak Raja**

Epochal artists provoke only adulation or criticism during their lifetimes. The interpretation of their art and their contribution begins only after they have departed from the scene. This is proving to be true of Ustad Vilayat Khan (1927-2004). This essay is a small contribution to this process. For the confidence with which I make my observations, I rely on four decades of training in the Vilayat Khan style of music, the intensive interaction I have had with the Ustad, a study of a substantial archive of his music, and decades of tutelage with the eminent scholar-musician, Pt. Arvind Parikh, the Ustad's most senior disciple.

### **The personality**

Vilayat Khan's was a personality shaped by the conviction that it was destined to leave its mark on the world. He would not have been happy with just being the greatest sitarist; he had to be amongst the all-time greats of Hindustani music. This set him on a path of passionate absorption of the tradition, unrelenting innovation and the pursuit of superhuman standards of perfection in the execution of his musical vision.

The burning ambition that powered Vilayat Khan's destiny was, partially, a reaction to the humiliations and privations suffered early in life. He had a very comfortable childhood as the elder son of Ustad Enayet Khan, court musician at Gauripur (now in Bangladesh). After he lost his father at the age of eleven, the most prosperous and eminent amongst his father's disciples denied him the training of his gharana (stylistic lineage), and abandoned the family to virtual destitution. This experience re-activated - after five generations - the Rajput (a warrior tribe) genes of Thakur Srujan Singh, the founder of his lineage. Vilayat Khan left Calcutta in his early teens in search of training and a career, and swore not to return until he had become India's foremost Sitarist.

These forces shaped Vilayat Khan into an essentially elitist musician. But, his was not an elitism of the snobbish category that makes music inaccessible to the majority. His repertoire was dominated by popular raga-s and tala-s, and always had a reasonable component of semi-classical music. His elitism made him place a premium on the approval of the cognoscenti, and made him averse to populism of every variety. He challenged his audiences with his elaborate architecture, richness of musical content, and sophisticated presentation.

Attempts have been made to portray Vilayat Khan as a representative of the romanticist movement in 20th century Hindustani music. Amongst instrumentalists, he was, without doubt, the peerless master of the romanticist genres. However, Vilayat Khan defies simplistic classification. He rendered profound music at the highest level of classicism and semi-classical and folk repertoire with heart-rending impact. Irrespective of the genre he performed, aloofness remained a basic quality of his music, as much as it was of his persona.

The Ustad often quoted the aphorism - "When you sit on the stage, perform with the authority of an Ustad. But, when you listen, no matter how insignificant the musician, listen with the receptivity of a disciple." He saw the artist as having a hotline to God, and artistic expression as a "Revelation," which audiences ought to receive in a spirit of reverence. The

core of elitism in his personality never allowed him to drift towards titillation, populism or kitsch.

His aloofness and elitism were an integral part of the feudal values acquired in early childhood. He had grown up amongst the nobility, and valued their cultivation of the arts, as also their standards of propriety and decorous conduct. As a corollary, he had only contempt for the credentials of the democratic state as a patron of the arts, and for the crassness of the culture nourished by bourgeois capitalism after independence. He stuck steadfastly to his values, and willingly paid the price for so doing.

### **The presence**

Ustad Vilayat Khan saw himself as an orthodox musician. The world of music, however, considers him a revolutionary musician. The clue to the mismatch of perceptions lies in that he was steeped in the vocalist tradition, while he expressed this commitment on the sitar. He revolutionized sitar music, which, until his father's era, had evolved as an extension of the traditional Rudra Veena idiom, though severely constrained in its melodic content by the instrument's limitations as an acoustic machine.

Circumstances drove Vilayat Khan into the orbit of vocalism during his most formative years. Consequently, he most wanted to sing, while family pride obliged him to become a sitarist. So, he did everything necessary to make the sitar sing. Vilayat Khan worked on the basic design of the sitar, its ergonomics, and its idiom to give it a new voice in Hindustani music. Vilayat Khan now enjoys so large a presence on the Hindustani music-scape, that it is difficult to determine which of the two traditions he hijacked - the vocal or the instrumental.

### **Formative influences**

Vilayat Khan is inconceivable without Enayet Khan. However, Enayet Khan is far from sufficient to explain Vilayat Khan. Vilayat Khan was largely a self-taught musician, who built a magnificent edifice of esthetically coherent music out of inputs from various sources.

Young Vilayat Khan had received only five or six years of training when his father departed. But, by then, he had already recorded two ragas on 78 RPM disc in the thoroughbred technique and idiom of his father. However, by the time of Enayet Khan's departure, sitar music was poised for a great leap forward because of revolutionary changes in the acoustic environment and audience profiles. Only an instrumentalist unfettered by the sitarist tradition of those times could have achieved such a leap. In this sense, Vilayat Khan's personal tragedy turned out to be a historic event for the evolution of the sitar.

In the 1930s, the stranglehold of heredity over musicianship was such that it ruled out the grooming of Vilayat Khan by a sitarist from another gharana (stylistic lineage). Even the possibility of half a solution vanished when his father's disciples deserted him. Vilayat Khan's search for training took him to Nahan in Punjab, the home of his maternal grandfather, Ustad Bande Hassan Khan and uncle, Ustad Zinda Hassan Khan, both eminent Khayal vocalists. Though, in later years, he also studied the Surbahar under his father's brother, Ustad Waheed Khan, his years at Nahan were the most formative years of his life, and had the greatest impact on his evolution as a musician, because they cast Vilayat Khan's ideation process decisively into the vocalist mold. Traces of this influence were evident when Vilayat Khan sang, taught vocal music, and through the style of his Khayal

compositions. Other vocalists, however, came later to dominate his vocalized idiom on the sitar.

The dominant influence on Vilayat Khan's musical vision came from Kirana maestros, Ustad Abdul Kareem Khan and Ustad Abdul Waheed Khan. He had memorized every single 78 RPM recording of Abdul Kareem Khan, and could render it verbatim. Vilayat Khan captured the essence of Abdul Waheed Khan's music through his principal follower, Ustad Ameer Khan. Ameer Khan, had also been influenced by Rajabali Khan of Dewas, whose music incorporated features of the Jaipur-Atrauli style of Ustad Alladiya Khan. In addition, Vilayat Khan greatly admired Ustad Faiyyaz Khan of Agra gharana, with whom he was on intimate terms. In addition to these major influences, Vilayat Khan adopted some features from the music of several other vocalists - Kesarbai Kerkar, Pt. Omkarnath Thakur, and Zohrabai Agrewali, to name a few. For his stroke-craft, he drew generously on the percussion idiom of the Tabla, the Pakhawaj, and even the Tasha and Nakkara, kettle-drums used as accompaniment to the Shehnai.

Vilayat Khan was not wedded to the musical values of any gharana except his own. His melodic imagination was not even as dependent on vocal music as is widely believed. He picked up musical ideas from every source that appealed to him, and integrated them into a style which was distinctively his own. His was an exceptional musical mind, aided by a photographic memory, which retained and processed musical inputs in a mysterious manner. One day, for instance, Vilayat Khan invited a beggar woman from the street to sing for him, paid her generously, and rendered her song as a bandish at a concert the next evening. Equally typical was the melodic idea he picked up from the chimes of the Big Ben in London, and adapted it as a composition in raga Hansadhvani for a concert the following day.

### **Vilayat Khan, the vocalist**

In compliance with a promise he had given to his mother, Vilayat Khan never presented a full-fledged vocal concert. But, he did not entirely deprive his fans of his competence and charm as a vocalist. He made it a practice - in most concerts - to sing parts of his performance along with their rendition on the sitar. Vilayat Khan's fans vouch that if the Ustad did not sing even once in a concert, they felt cheated. He not only had the mind of a vocalist, but also a trained, authoritative voice.

He coached several students - amateur and professional - in vocal music. He had studied the styles of many 20th century masters of Khayal and Thumree and, though only in private, often did remarkably authentic impersonations of them. In his memoirs, *The raga of my life*, Arvind Parikh has recorded that shortly before her demise, Begum Akhtar, the empress of Ghazal and the semi-classical genres had started studying with the Ustad, and had wished to be formally initiated as a disciple. The contemporary Khayal maestro, Ulhas Kashalkar, sought the Ustad's guidance in his last years, and studied several of his raga creations and bandish-es with him.

### **Vilayat Khan, the surbahar player**

In Ustad Vilayat Khan's gharana, musicians were routinely trained on the sitar as well as the surbahar (a magnified and bass version of the sitar). This tradition was a part of the 19th century practice of presenting the elaborate Rudra Veena/Dhrupad-style alap on the surbahar followed by post-Dhrupad bandish-es on the sitar. In this tradition, Vilayat Khan

had studied the Surbahar with his father's brother, Ustad Waheed Khan. However, according to the Ustad, his mother prevailed upon him to cede the surbahar territory to his younger brother, Ustad Imrat Khan.

By and large, he respected this arrangement. As a result, both the instruments gained by having outstanding specialists from the same stylistic lineage. Vilayat Khan did, however, do at least one concert on the surbahar in Bombay in the late 1970s. Towards the end of his life, he also did two recordings - Kafi Kanada for India Archive Music, New York and Bilaskhani Todi for Navras Records, UK. The three recordings are proof of the command the Ustad had over the instrument.

His performing style on the surbahar moved away from the traditional Dhrupad idiom followed by his father and grandfather and was in tune with the stylistic orientations of the post-Dhrupad era. In conformity with the tradition, however, Vilayat Khan performed only the solo prelude (alap-jod-jhala) on the surbahar, and never performed percussion-accompanied music on the instrument.

### **Vilayat Khan, the duet artist**

Vilayat Khan had a minor, but distinguished, presence as a duet artist. During the 1950's he did several memorable concerts with the sarod maestro, Ustad Ali Akbar Khan, whom he admired immensely. He also launched a partnership with the violinist, Gajananrao Joshi, which turned out to be short-lived. During the 1960s, he released two LPs of duets with his brother, Ustad Imrat Khan, on the surbahar - Chandni Kedar and Miya-ki Malhar. Both are regarded amongst the finest pieces of instrumental music recorded in the latter half of the 20th century. Thereafter, the sitar-surbahar duet of the brothers was also featured sporadically on the concert circuit. Starting from the 1980s, Vilayat Khan occasionally performed duets with his son, Shujaat Khan, on the surbahar.

By far the most durable, and also successful, partnership the Ustad enjoyed was with the Shehnai maestro, Ustad Bismillah Khan. It was a reflection of their mutual affection and respect, as much as their parity in stature and compatibility as musicians. Their concerts were always sold out, and their recordings are prized collector's items.

### **Vilayat Khan and film music**

Not surprisingly for an elitist musician - and much like classical music stalwarts of his generation - Vilayat Khan's formal involvement in film music was negligible. He composed and conducted the score for three feature films - Satyajit Ray's *Jalsaghar* in Bengali, Merchant-Ivory Productions' *The Guru* in English, and Madhusudan Kumar's *Kadambari* in Hindi. In addition to these, he also gave music for a little known documentary film in Bengali produced by Dr. Barin Roy. The score for Ray's *Jalsaghar* won a national award.

### **The repertoire**

Vilayat Khan's gharana has a tradition of specializing in a few raga-s for concert performance. His grandfather, Ustad Imdad Khan, for instance, became the most influential sitar and surbahar player of his times by concentrating on just two ragas: Yaman and Puriya. Likewise, his father, Ustad Enayet Khan, an equally influential sitarist, performed very few raga-s. The gharana has performed almost entirely in Teentala. Vilayat Khan's own

repertoire of raga-s was probably larger than either of his immediate ancestors because he was addressing a larger and more diverse audience through a variety of media. He also stuck to Teental, except for a rare Khayal bandish rendered in Ektala. In semi-classical music, however, Vilayat Khan often performed in Dadra and Keherva.

Vilayat Khan sought greater and greater depth in the exploration of a limited range of mature melodic ideas rather than enlarge the span of coverage. In line with this philosophy, he never considered his musicianship adequate for rendering a particular raga. Pt. Arvind Parikh who has watched his Ustad practice for a concert, reports that Vilayat Khan tried out every phrase of a raga in a variety of ways until it delivered the desired melodic and acoustic result, and practiced it for as long as it took to perfect it before a performance. Only the flashes of spontaneous brilliance relied on chance. The hard core of every raga was subjected to serious exploration in isolation and ruthless preparation for punctilious execution.

An inventory of his raga repertoire has been compiled based on a survey of about 200 hours of concert and published recordings starting from 1950. Over 80% of his concerts and commercial recordings are of ragas currently classified as common or popular. About 15% may be considered rare. And, 5% of the ragas performed by him are those that the Hindustani (North Indian) music has recently adopted from the Carnatic (South Indian) tradition.

Not surprisingly, Vilayat Khan had little enthusiasm for creating new raga-s. He did, on occasion, experiment with idiosyncratic interpretations of mature ragas. Only two of them sustained his interest, and evolved towards some kind of independent raga-ness: Enayet Khani Kanada (initially named Vilayat Khani Kanada) and Sanjh Saravali. In the last two decades of his life, he explored these two "raga-s" with reasonable seriousness. Of the two, Sanjh Saravali is the more significant. With its seeds having germinated in the mid-1970s, Sanjh Saravali had a long history of sustained evolution. By the time the Ustad [recorded it for India Archive Music](#) in 1991, it had matured sufficiently to yield perhaps the greatest piece of instrumental music recorded in the latter half of the 20th century. In response to its creator's involvement in it, Sanjh Saravali acquired a following during his own lifetime. Ulhas Kashalkar, the distinguished contemporary vocalist, studied the raga with the Ustad, and started performing it. This development triggered off considerable interest in the raga amongst younger vocalists.

Starting from the 1980s, Ustad Vilayat Khan also found the Raga-Malika an increasingly convenient and popular means of ending a concert. The raga-base for the link-chain was most commonly Khamaj, but occasionally Piloo, and rarely Bhairavi. He rendered the Raga-Malika either in pure alap format or in alap and bandish format. He used this format to present glimpses of a variety of common ragas.

Amongst raga-s, Bhairavi remained his all-time favourite. He performed Bhairavi more frequently, and in more varied treatments, than any other raga. In fact, it can be said, that Vilayat Khan had a lifelong romance with Bhairavi.

### **The Gayaki Anga**

The term "Gayaki Anga" refers to that facet of Ustad Vilayat Khan's music that enabled him to simulate the experience of vocalism in all phases of the rendition. The classification distinguishes his music from the "Tantkar Anga" (the idiom of the plucked instruments)

which was performed on the Sitar until the era of his father, Ustad Enayat Khan. The "Tantkar Anga," being fundamental to the technology of music making on the sitar, can never be jettisoned. Any sitarist of stature has to be a master of the "Tantkar Anga" before he can do anything more with the instrument. If he decides to move towards vocalism, he can, at best, create an illusion of a vocal recital by transcending technical limitations. And, this is precisely what Vilayat Khan achieved.

Modern vocalism differs so fundamentally from the music of the plucked instruments, that it is impossible to identify all the elements that constitute this distinction. Vilayat Khan was a vocalist who wanted to sing on the sitar, and kept working at it all his life with ever growing success. He enabled the experience of sitar music to transcend the limitations of the technology of the instrument, and brought it closer to the acoustic, aesthetic and emotional richness of vocal music.

Vilayat Khan's vocalism shaped every element of his music - the architectural, sculptural, ornamental, and acoustic. The architecture of Vilayat Khan's rendition of classical music most faithfully and meticulously follows the linear architecture of modern Khayal vocalism. This involves the progressive enhancement of melodic and rhythmic density and complexity without any regression. His choice and sequencing of improvisatory movements in the vilambit as well drut bandishes strictly follows the Khayal protocol, suitably adapted to exploit the distinctive features of the sitar. Vilayat Khan's melodic sculpture swung sharply towards Khayal style phrasing involving melodic continuity over two or more intervallic transitions. This was a major change from the staccato intonation and single-transition phrasing patterns of the traditional sitar idiom.

The influence of vocalism in Vilayat Khan's music was prominent in his alap. He adopted a narrative approach to the alap, inspired by the Merukhand (building-block) system of raga exposition evolved by Kirana gharana maestros. Arvind Parikh has described this feature of the Vilayat Khan alap as a "story-telling intimacy enriched with emotional meaning through variations of volume, timbre and pace." A part of this narrative approach was the subtle use of silences and the use of the Tanpura-substitute (the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th strings) as a filler of silences.

Another prominent facet of vocalism is found in the Ustad's bandish-es (compositions). Although he continued to perform bandish-es in the traditional Masitkhani and Razakhani formats, Vilayat Khan made a radical departure by adapting Khayal and Thumree bandish-es for rendition on the sitar. In a few ragas, he also composed his own Khayal-style bandish-es. His own compositions in the vocalised style were first composed as Khayals, along with the poetic element, perfected as pieces of vocal music, and then adapted for the sitar. He demonstrated this process frequently by singing the bandish-es in concert, along with their sitar adaptations.

An important part of Vilayat Khan's vocalised idiom comes from his photographic memory. He has memorised so many Khayal renditions of the departed masters that echoes of their recordings - firmly etched in the memories of his audiences - are easily discernible in the Ustad's phrasing. His renditions thus acquired a haunting quality that often rendered his admirers sleepless after a concert. This nostalgia triggered off by his renditions became compelling in the Ustad's Thumree-style renditions. His study of the thumree tradition relied largely on his memory of early 20th century recordings. As recently as October 1991, at a concert in Los Angeles, he reproduced an entire Thumree rendering of Zohrabai Agrewali (*Paani bhareri* in Ghara) from a 78 RPM disc recorded more than half a century ago, accompanying his sitar rendering with his own voice.

In relation to the human voice, a crucial limitation of the sitar is in the communication of emotional values. The human voice communicates them effectively with the aid of variations in volume and timbre. In his attempts at singing on the sitar, Vilayat Khan evolved an entire science of acoustic manipulation of the sitar. The magic of his stroke-craft (right hand) remains the envy of every sitarist who has heard him. He used this magic not only to simulate the vocal expression, but also a variety of special effects - often imitating a Piano, Sarangi, and Shehnai - hitherto not heard on the sitar. A lot of this magic was painstakingly perfected. But, a lot of it was intuitive. I had queried him once on the special effects he had produced on a recording. His answer was: "I don't really know how these are produced. Over the years, I have built up a relationship with my instrument. I visualise the sound I want, and the instrument delivers."

### **The man-machine relationship**

For involuntary processes to have taken charge of the Ustad's music - as they do in vocal music - he would have needed to weld his body and his instrument into a single unified musical machine. This is probably the most fundamental, and least understood, facet of Vilayat Khan's contribution to the art of the sitar. He had probably not reasoned out the precise logic of the ergonomics he evolved. But, it could be inferred from the manner in which he taught Arvind Parikh, whose analysis I present here. Vilayat Khan's basic tenet was that the entire body should be relaxed with the instrument in the sitarist's hand, and every movement should be natural.

The most significant ergonomic contribution of Vilayat Khan was perfecting the posture and the handling of the instrument. Vilayat Khan held the sitar exactly at an angle of 45 degrees to the floor on which the sitarist sits. This was a change from his father, Ustad Enayet Khan's posture, whose angle - judging from his photographs - was between 35 and 40 degrees to the floor. This change delivered an incredible enhancement in mechanical efficiency in bi-directional movement of both the hands - melodic execution as well as stroke-craft.

Vilayat Khan then reasoned that the torso should not have to lean on the right side to hold the tumba (chamber resonator) down. The elbow of the right hand should, therefore, be supported by the tumba of the sitar at a height at which the torso can remain upright. So, he increased the size of the tumba to achieve the desired level of comfort. This change also determined the distance of the sitar from the sitarist's body, and the point at which the stem of the sitar would rest on the right knee of the sitarist to achieve the 45 degrees angle. With this posture and handling, he ensured that the right hand felt no stress in holding down the tumba, and the left hand was not required to hold up the stem. As a result, the power of the forearm and palm muscles of both the hands could be deployed entirely for executing the music.

Vilayat Khan's ergonomic engineering redefined and standardized the grip of the instrument with respect to both hands, the stance of the right-hand palm while implementing the strokes, and the design and placement of the mizrab (wire plectrum) worn on the sitarist's index finger. All these changes had the result of maximizing mechanical efficiency, and control over the musical output, while minimizing stress on the muscles directly engaged in music making. He wanted to do with the sitar what no one before him had attempted, and found a way of making the instrument obey his commands. However for achieving total compliance, he also had to re-engineer the instrument.

## Re-engineering the instrument

Executing melody on the sitar is subject to two kinds of melodic discontinuity - that imposed by the frequency of left hand moving between frets, and that imposed by the frequency of sound priming by the right hand. Both these had to be minimized if Vilayat Khan was to simulate the aural experience of vocal music on the sitar. He had to get many more intonations under the impact of each stroke, while also ensuring a much greater sustenance of each intonation. The ratio of melodic density to stroke density had to be tilted sharply in favour of melodic density. In addition, the instrument had to be made capable of delivering a wider range of timbres than had hitherto been possible. A part of the solution to these problems was technique. But, the larger part of it had to be the instrument's ability to support the technique. These were the guiding considerations for Vilayat Khan's re-engineering of the instrument. But, once they were put in motion, a more comprehensive vision of the vocalized aural experience took charge of the process.

For executing the vocalized idiom, Vilayat Khan's first imperative was that the melodic execution should shift predominantly to string-deflection techniques, such as meend, murki and gamak. The Enayet Khan sitar rarely attempted meends of more than two or three tones pulled from the same fret. Complex seven or eight-tone murki-s and heavy gamak-s were absent from the Enayet Khan idiom. If any of these, or even a five-tone meend was attempted on the Enayet Khan sitar, the stress on the instrument would upset the tuning of all the strings. This consideration, and others related to string-deflection, received considerable attention from Vilayat Khan.

The first facet of this was the reinforcement of the instrument for greater stress-tolerance. Vilayat Khan increased the thickness of the tabli (the cover of the tumba), and of the targahan (the channel on top of the instrument which carries the strings to the nuts). He also reinforced the joint between the tumba and the stem with steel bars to enable the instrument to withstand the additional stress of string deflection. The second facet of the re-engineering was enhancing the ability of the instrument to deliver a five-tone string-deflection. The Enayet Khan sitar had a slightly narrower stem, and relatively flat frets, with the strings running close to the surface of the frets. With the enlargement of the tumba by Vilayat Khan, the stem became slightly broader in proportion. But, the frets still did not provide sufficient surface area for a five-tone deflection. So, Vilayat Khan introduced frets of more prominent convexity, and increased the distance between the strings and the frets. These changes helped to create and support an idiom that relied predominantly on string deflection. There was, however, also an acoustic dimension to this. The thickness and metallurgical composition of the frets on the Enayet Khan sitar were not entirely hospitable to a meend-dominant style. So, Vilayat Khan made them thicker, and replaced the brass frets with those of an acoustically superior alloy.

The problem of acoustic sustain led to other changes. The larger tumba provided part of the solution. However, in the sitars of pre-Vilayat Khan design, the acoustic output generated by each stroke was deployed more in generating the volume than sustain. This required a change in design as well as technique. A part of the dissipation of acoustic output was taking place from the upper tumba, which was in use till Enayet Khan's time. In that era, devoid of electronic amplification, the upper tumba provided a useful booster to volume as well as delivery of harmonics. Vilayat Khan dispensed with the contraption, thus allowing the stem to function more efficiently as a column-resonator. His other solutions were at the stroke-production end of the instrument. He perfected fine-tuning the jawari bridge in such a manner that the acoustic output was subdued in volume as well as brightness, but richer in sustain. Along with this, his fine-tuning specifications gave him access to a wider range of

timbres. This change also required changes in stroke-craft.

Along with experiments in stroke-craft, Vilayat Khan kept experimenting with different materials for forging the jawari bridge. In the 1970s, he dispensed with the traditional ivory bridge, and the deer-horn (its substitute) of the Enayet Khan era. Thereafter, he experimented with various hard-wood bridges, and even with some space-age polymers. In the last few years, he had settled down to using an ebony bridge, which gave him the best combination of stability and acoustic features. Although he did use the services of expert craftsmen to periodically rework the jawari bridge, he had mastered the technique, and could do it himself.

The distinctive sound of the Vilayat Khan sitar, however, is also the product of more obvious changes - those in the tuning of the strings. Vilayat Khan thus converted the traditional treble-and-bass sitar, modeled after the ancient Rudra Veena, into a pure treble sitar. The traditional sitar had seven strings running over the main bridge, and an effective melodic canvas of three and a half octaves. Vilayat Khan sacrificed one octave, and reduced the number of strings to six. He removed strings representing the lowest octave, and replaced them with strings tuned to the middle with a suitable combination reflecting the tonal geometry of the raga. These strings were not intended for executing melody, but to function as a chord-like filler of silences, over and above the chikari (drone strings) which performed this function partially. Vilayat Khan developed a style of deploying this chord-like device as a suggestion of Tanpura accompaniment. In addition to functioning as a Tanpura replacement, these strings provided a powerful reinforcement of the raga's psycho-acoustic character.

With these structural and tuning changes aimed at executing his vocalized vision of music, Vilayat Khan created an entirely new instrument with a distinctive sound and acoustic ambience. As a result, today, just the opening stroke on a Vilayat Khan style sitar is sufficient to identify a sitarist of the Vilayat Khan style.

### **The Vilayat Khan legacy**

The legacy of a musician consists of his style, and his recordings. Judged on these facets of his legacy, Vilayat Khan ranks amongst the greatest musicians of the 20th century.

Vilayat Khan looms so large over the world of the sitar, that the gharana, named originally after his grandfather, Ustad Imdad Khan, may now legitimately be re-christened the "Vilayat Khani gharana." Today, followers of the Vilayat Khan style amongst sitarists outnumber those of all the remaining gharanas of sitar music. The sitar world is now dominated by the Ustad's brother, sons, nephews and disciples, along with other third generation disciples of his father, Ustad Enayet Khan, and of his uncle, Ustad Waheed Khan. Over and above the descendants and direct disciples of the Imdad Khan lineage, there is a large number of professional sitarists who have studied the Vilayat Khan style, and follow it without having been formally admitted into the gharana. The wave of "Khayal-isation" of instrumental music set in motion by Vilayat Khan has swept all of sitar music, and made significant inroads into the music of all the major instruments. Interestingly, young vocalists are also known to study Vilayat Khan's recordings, especially for his tan-s.

Though a comprehensive discography of the Ustad's published recordings is yet to be compiled, he is estimated to have released between 70 and 100 commercial recordings during his career spanning six decades. The existing archive of concert recordings in

possession of his admirers is likely to exceed 400 hours of music. These recordings are amongst the most actively exchanged items in the grey market for live music. Digitally remastered versions of many of these recordings will certainly surface in the pre-recorded music market over the next few years. The National Centre for the Performing Arts persuaded the Ustad to do about 30 hours of lecture demonstration on his gharana's music in 1979. By special arrangement, this archive is available to the public for hearing. Although the Ustad stopped performing on All India Radio in 1952, AIR could be in possession of a sizeable Vilayat Khan archive, which could become publicly available one day.

Considering the totality of the Vilayat Khan legacy, his place in the history of music is comparable to the greatest amongst 20th century musicians like Abdul Kareem Khan, Faiyyaz Khan, and Alladiya Khan.