

The Musical Legacy of Ustad Mehboob Khan: Preserving the Sarangi Tradition in Hindustani Classical Music

Aastha Gill

VPO Karsa DOD, Dist. Karnal (Haryana)

Abstract

The sarangi occupies a distinctive position in Hindustani classical music due to its expressive tonal qualities and its close relationship with vocal performance. Despite its significant role as both an accompanying and solo instrument, the artistic contributions of several important sarangi musicians remain insufficiently documented in academic scholarship. This article examines the musical legacy of Ustad Mehboob Khan Sahib, an eminent sarangi musician associated with the Jaipur musical tradition. Drawing on qualitative research originally undertaken for the author's M.Phil. dissertation, the study uses oral-history interviews with musicians associated with the tradition, alongside documentary and archival materials, to examine Khan Sahib's career as a performer and accompanist, his compositional work, pedagogical practices, and contribution to the transmission of musical knowledge. Particular attention is given to the ways in which his musicianship combined technical proficiency, aesthetic sensitivity, and responsiveness to vocal performance, as well as to his role in transmitting musical values through teaching and mentorship. By documenting these interconnected dimensions of his musical life, the article argues that Khan Sahib's legacy extends beyond individual performance to the preservation and intergenerational transmission of the sarangi tradition. The study also demonstrates the value of oral-history research for documenting musicians whose artistic knowledge and influence are preserved substantially through performance, memory, and teacher–disciple relationships.

Key-Words: Ustad Mehboob Khan; Sarangi; Hindustani Classical Music; Jaipur Gharana, Guru- Shishya Tradition; Oral History; Musical Heritage.

1. Introduction

Hindustani classical music represents a complex musical tradition in which artistic knowledge has historically been transmitted through close relationships between teachers and disciples. Central to this process is the *guru–shishya paramparā*, through which musical knowledge extends beyond the acquisition of *rāga*, *tāla*, repertoire, and performance technique to encompass listening, observation, disciplined practice, aesthetic understanding, and the values associated with a particular musical lineage. Such modes of transmission have enabled musical traditions to retain continuity across generations while simultaneously allowing individual musicians to develop distinctive artistic identities.

Within this musical environment, the sarangi occupies a particularly significant position. Its capacity for sustained melodic expression, ornamentation, and subtle variations of pitch enables the instrument to closely engage with the expressive characteristics of the human voice. Historically, the sarangi has been closely associated with vocal accompaniment in Hindustani classical music, while accomplished performers have also established it as an independent solo instrument. The artistic role of the sarangi therefore extends beyond instrumental technique: it

is deeply connected with rāga interpretation, vocal aesthetics, improvisation, and the collaborative relationship between vocalist and accompanist (Bor, 1987).

Despite the importance of the instrument, understanding the history of the sarangi requires attention not only to the instrument itself but also to the musicians through whom its performance practices have been preserved and developed. Musical traditions are sustained through individual performers, teachers, disciples, families, institutions, and performance networks. In traditions that depend substantially upon oral and embodied transmission, however, the experiences and knowledge of musicians may not always be adequately represented in written historical accounts. Consequently, documenting individual musicians through interviews, archival evidence, musical materials, and the recollections of their contemporaries can provide important insights into how musical knowledge is transmitted and transformed (Perks & Thomson, 2016).

It is within this context that the musical career of Ustad Mehboob Khan Sahib assumes particular significance. Associated with the Jaipur musical tradition, Khan Sahib developed a distinguished career as a sarangi performer and accompanist. The evidence documented in the present research indicates that his musicianship combined technical refinement with expressive sensitivity and a strong understanding of the aesthetic principles of Hindustani classical music. His performances were characterised by attention to intonation, melodic development, tonal clarity, and responsiveness to the principal performer. As an accompanist, his role required not merely reproducing melodic phrases but responding spontaneously to rāga development, rhythmic organisation, improvisation, and the individual stylistic approach of the vocalist.

The present article examines the musical legacy and Contribution of Ustad Mehboob Khan Sahib, with particular attention to his work as a sarangi performer and accompanist, his compositional activity, his pedagogical practice, and his role in the transmission of the Jaipur sarangi tradition. Rather than treating his career simply as a chronological biography, the study considers how his artistic practice contributed to the preservation and continuation of musical knowledge.

The article draws upon qualitative research originally undertaken for the author's M.Phil. dissertation. The research incorporated oral-history interviews, documentary and archival materials, photographic documentation, and engagement with musicians connected to the tradition. Interview participants included Padma Shri Ustad Moinuddin Khan, members of the Sabri musical family, sarangi artist Momin Khan, and tabla artist Ustad Nisar Hussain, whose accounts provided perspectives on musical lineage, performance practice, pedagogy, oral memory, and artistic transmission. The use of these first-hand accounts is particularly important because they allow aspects of Khan Sahib's musical personality and teaching practice to be understood through the experiences of musicians who encountered the tradition directly.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Sarangi in Hindustani Classical Music

The sarangi occupies an important yet historically complex position within Hindustani classical music. As a bowed string instrument capable of producing sustained notes, subtle pitch inflections, *meend*, and other forms of melodic ornamentation, it developed a particularly close

relationship with North Indian vocal music. Its ability to follow the melodic contours and expressive nuances of the voice established the sarangi as an important instrument of vocal accompaniment, while accomplished performers also developed distinctive traditions of solo performance. Scholarship on the instrument therefore situates the sarangi at the intersection of vocal aesthetics, instrumental technique, accompaniment, and hereditary musical knowledge (Bor, 1987; Qureshi, 1997).

A significant historical study of the instrument is Joep Bor's *The Voice of the Sarangi*, which traces the history of bowed instruments in India and examines the changing position of the sarangi and its performers within Hindustani musical culture. Bor (1987) demonstrates that the sarangi played a particularly significant role in Hindustani music between the eighteenth and early twentieth centuries, when sarangi musicians were closely associated with professional singers as accompanists and, in many instances, as teachers. His research also draws attention to the later marginalisation of the instrument and to the vulnerability of musical knowledge when traditions depend upon relatively small communities of specialist performers.

The relationship between sarangi performance and vocal music is especially important for understanding the instrument's aesthetic identity. Rather than functioning merely as harmonic or melodic support, sarangi accompaniment requires the performer to respond closely to the vocalist's interpretation of *rāga*, ornamentation, rhythmic development, and improvisation. This relationship places considerable demands on the accompanist's knowledge of repertoire and performance conventions. At the same time, the development of the sarangi as a solo concert instrument demonstrates how musicians have adapted techniques associated with vocal expression to create an independent instrumental language (Bor, 1987).

More recent scholarship has extended this discussion from the social and historical position of the sarangi towards detailed analysis of its musical language. Magriel (2025), for example, examines the relationship between sarangi performance and Hindustani vocal music, considering how the instrument's distinctive construction and performance technique shape its capacity to reproduce vocal characteristics. His work draws attention to the ways in which sarangi musicians transform vocal principles into an instrumental performance language rather than simply imitating the voice. This perspective is particularly relevant to the present study because Ustad Mehboob Khan's musical contribution developed through both accompaniment and instrumental performance. Examining his practice therefore provides an opportunity to consider how vocal aesthetics, instrumental technique, and individual musicianship intersect within the sarangi tradition.

2.2 Gharana, Lineage and Guru-Shishya Transmission

The concept of *gharana* occupies an important position in Hindustani classical music, referring not simply to a geographical or familial association but to a lineage through which distinctive approaches to performance, repertoire, aesthetics, and musical knowledge are transmitted across generations. A *gharana* develops its identity through continuity between teachers and disciples, while individual musicians may simultaneously interpret inherited practices according to their own artistic sensibilities. Consequently, musical lineage involves both preservation and change: performers inherit established aesthetic principles while contributing

their own interpretations to the continuing development of the tradition (Neuman, 1990; Qureshi, 2007).

The guru–shishya relationship has historically been central to this process of musical transmission. Unlike pedagogical systems based primarily upon written notation or formal curricula, traditional Hindustani musical training has depended substantially upon sustained interaction between teacher and disciple. Through listening, imitation, repetition, observation, and rigorous *riyaz*, the disciple acquires not only repertoire and technical skills but also subtler aspects of musical interpretation that may be difficult to communicate through notation alone. Knowledge of *raga*, improvisation, ornamentation, phrasing, rhythmic interaction, and performance aesthetics is therefore transmitted as embodied musical practice (Neuman, 1990). At the same time, scholarship cautions against treating Hindustani classical tradition as an unchanged inheritance from the distant past. Bakhle (2005), for example, demonstrates that modern Indian classical music was significantly reshaped during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries through changing institutions, systems of musical education, nationalism, and efforts to codify musical knowledge. Her historical analysis is important because it suggests that concepts of tradition and musical authority are continually negotiated rather than simply preserved unchanged. The *gharana* can therefore be understood as a living musical lineage in which inherited knowledge interacts with broader historical and institutional transformations.

2.3 Performance, Accompaniment and Musical Knowledge

Performance in Hindustani classical music is shaped by the interaction between established musical structures and the interpretive choices made by performers. Although a *raga* provides a recognised melodic framework, its presentation is not completely predetermined. Musicians develop the *raga* through processes of elaboration, ornamentation, rhythmic organisation, and improvisation, making each performance an act of both continuity and individual interpretation. The musical knowledge required for such performance is therefore not limited to theoretical understanding; it also involves listening, anticipation, responsiveness, and the ability to make creative decisions within established aesthetic conventions (Ruckert, 2004).

Within this performance environment, accompaniment constitutes a specialised form of musicianship. The sarangi has historically served as an important melodic accompanist to Hindustani vocal music, and its close relationship with vocal expression requires the accompanist to possess extensive knowledge of *raga*, repertoire, stylistic conventions, and improvisational practice. Rather than functioning simply as a secondary melodic instrument, the sarangi accompanist must listen closely to the principal performer and respond to melodic phrases, ornamentation, rhythmic movement, and changes in the direction of improvisation. Magriel's study of sarangi style emphasises the close relationship between sarangi performance and Hindustani vocal music while also demonstrating that the instrument develops its own technical and expressive approaches to vocal-derived musical material (Magriel, 2025).

Such responsiveness makes accompaniment an important form of embodied musical knowledge. A skilled accompanist must balance imitation with restraint and independent musical judgement, supporting the principal performer without disrupting the development of

the performance. This process depends upon experience acquired through sustained musical training, observation, listening, and participation in performance rather than through notation alone. Accompaniment can therefore be understood as an interactive musical practice in which knowledge is continually demonstrated through real-time decisions.

2.4 Oral History and Musical Heritage

Oral history provides an important methodological framework for documenting musical traditions in which knowledge is transmitted substantially through memory, performance, personal relationships, and lived experience. Unlike approaches that depend exclusively upon written or institutional records, oral-history research enables scholars to engage directly with the recollections and interpretations of individuals who have participated in particular cultural and historical processes. Perks and Thomson (2016) demonstrate that oral testimony can provide valuable evidence about individual and collective memory while also requiring researchers to consider the interpretive nature of recollection, the relationship between interviewer and participant, and the ethical responsibilities involved in representing personal narratives.

This approach is particularly relevant to the study of Hindustani classical music, where significant aspects of musical knowledge have historically circulated through oral and embodied forms of transmission. Musicians' recollections can illuminate dimensions of musical life that may be difficult to reconstruct from published sources alone, including relationships between teachers and disciples, approaches to *riyaz*, performance experiences, artistic values, repertoire, and interactions between musicians. Oral testimony should therefore not be treated merely as supplementary biographical information; when critically interpreted alongside other evidence, it can contribute to understanding how musicians themselves experience, remember, and transmit a musical tradition (Neuman, 1990).

The documentation of such knowledge also intersects with broader discussions of intangible cultural heritage. UNESCO's 2003 Convention recognises both oral traditions and performing arts as domains of intangible cultural heritage and defines safeguarding broadly to include documentation, research, preservation, and transmission. Importantly, this framework emphasises living knowledge and skills transmitted between generations rather than understanding heritage only in terms of physical objects or monuments (UNESCO, 2003). This perspective is particularly relevant to musical traditions, whose continuity depends upon performers, teachers, learners, performance practices, and the social contexts within which musical knowledge remains meaningful (Smith, 2006).

2.5 Research Gap and Positioning of the Present Study

Existing scholarship provides important foundations for understanding the history and performance of the sarangi, its relationship with Hindustani vocal music, and the transmission of musical knowledge through gharana and guru–shishya traditions (Bor, 1987; Magriel, 2025). However, the contributions of individual musicians may remain dispersed across oral memories, personal archives, recordings, institutional documentation, and the recollections of fellow musicians and disciples. Detailed scholarly documentation integrating the multiple dimensions of Ustad Mehboob Khan Sahib's contribution remains limited.

The present study addresses this gap by bringing together oral-history interviews, documentary and archival evidence, and musical materials to examine Khan Sahib's performance, accompaniment, compositional activity, pedagogy, and role in transmitting the sarangi tradition. Rather than presenting a conventional musical biography, the study considers his career as a case through which the relationship between individual artistry, musical lineage, pedagogy, and cultural heritage can be understood.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research approach to examine the musical life, artistic contribution, and legacy of Ustad Mehboob Khan Sahib. The research was originally undertaken as part of the author's M.Phil. study and combined oral-history interviews with documentary, archival, photographic, and published sources. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the study sought not only to document biographical information but also to understand musical experiences, pedagogical practices, performance values, and the transmission of knowledge as remembered and interpreted by musicians associated with the tradition.

3.1 Oral-History Interviews and Primary Sources

A major component of the research consisted of first-hand interviews with musicians connected to the musical tradition under investigation. Participants included Padma Shri Ustad Moinuddin Khan, members of the Sabri musical family, sarangi artist Momin Khan, and tabla artist Ustad Nisar Hussain. These interviews provided information concerning musical lineage, Ustad Mehboob Khan's artistic personality, performance practices, accompaniment, teaching, professional relationships, and the transmission of musical knowledge.

3.2 Documentary and Archival Sources

Primary interview material was supplemented by documentary and archival evidence relating to Ustad Mehboob Khan's musical career. The research incorporated photographs, certificates, institutional records, available recordings, and other materials documenting his performances and professional activities. Particular attention was given to evidence concerning his association with All India Radio (Akashvani) and Doordarshan, participation in musical programmes and conferences, and recognition within professional musical circles., alongside performances, awards, and other aspects of his professional career.

Published literature on Hindustani classical music, the sarangi, gharana traditions, and musical transmission was also consulted to place the primary material within a wider historical and musicological context. These secondary sources provide a framework for understanding how Khan Sahib's individual musical practice relates to broader developments within Hindustani classical music.

3.3 Musical and Thematic Analysis

The collected material was examined thematically, with particular attention to recurring areas relevant to the objectives of the study. These included musical training and lineage, performance and accompaniment, compositional activity, pedagogical practice, professional career, and the transmission of musical knowledge. Evidence concerning Khan Sahib's musical practice was considered alongside accounts provided by musicians and available documentary

materials in order to identify connections between individual recollections and broader patterns within his artistic career.

Musical materials, including documented bandishes in rāgas Kedar and Maru Bihag, were considered alongside oral testimony and biographical evidence to examine Khan Sahib's engagement with rāga, tāla, lyrical expression, and compositional structure.

3.4 Research Approach and Limitations

The study does not attempt to construct a definitive account of every aspect of Ustad Mehboob Khan's life. Oral histories are shaped by individual memory, personal experience, and the relationship of participants to the musician being discussed. Similarly, surviving documentary and archival materials may represent only particular stages of an artist's professional career. For this reason, the research uses multiple forms of evidence wherever possible, considering interviews alongside documentary, musical, photographic, and published materials.

4. Findings and Analysis

4.1 Musical Training and Artistic Development of Ustad Mehboob Khan

Ustad Mehboob Khan Sahib's musical development was deeply rooted in the hereditary and pedagogical traditions of Hindustani classical music. His artistic formation demonstrates the importance of sustained training, close engagement with senior musicians, and the transmission of musical knowledge through established lineages. The evidence gathered during the present research indicates that his development as a sarangi musician was not limited to acquiring instrumental technique; it also involved an extensive understanding of *raga*, *tala*, vocal expression, accompaniment, and the aesthetic expectations associated with Hindustani classical performance. These interconnected dimensions of his training subsequently shaped his identity as both a sarangi performer and an accompanist.

An important characteristic of Khan Sahib's musicianship was the close relationship between sarangi performance and vocal music. His understanding of vocal forms enabled him to respond sensitively to the melodic and expressive requirements of singers during accompaniment. The research materials describe particular attention to *sur*, *laya*, *tala*, melodic development, and the expressive character of the composition. Such knowledge was essential for a sarangi accompanist because accompaniment required continuous awareness of the principal artist's interpretation rather than the mechanical reproduction of melodic phrases. His musical development therefore illustrates how instrumental expertise within the sarangi tradition depended upon a broader understanding of Hindustani vocal aesthetics.

4.2 Performance Style and the Art of Sarangi Accompaniment

Ustad Mehboob Khan Sahib's artistic identity was shaped significantly by his command of sarangi accompaniment. Accompanying a Hindustani classical vocalist requires considerably more than technical proficiency on the instrument. The accompanist must possess a developed understanding of *raga*, *tala*, melodic progression, ornamentation, and the individual approach of the principal performer. The evidence documented in the present research indicates that Khan Sahib's accompaniment was distinguished by careful listening and an ability to respond to the musical direction established by the vocalist. His practice therefore demonstrates

accompaniment as an active and interpretive form of musicianship rather than a secondary role within performance.

A particularly important feature of his approach was his sensitivity to sur and melodic expression. The sarangi's close relationship with the human voice enables an accompanist to reproduce and respond to subtle melodic movements, but doing so effectively requires considerable control over intonation and phrasing. Accounts gathered during the research emphasise Khan Sahib's attention to tonal accuracy and his ability to follow the expressive movement of vocal performance. His accompaniment sought to complement the vocalist's musical ideas while maintaining the characteristic sonority and expressive possibilities of the sarangi.

His command of laya and tala was equally important. Hindustani classical performance develops through continuous interaction between melodic and rhythmic structures, particularly as improvisation becomes more elaborate. For an accompanist, this requires an ability to anticipate changes in musical direction while remaining attentive to the rhythmic framework of the composition. Khan Sahib's musicianship, as represented in the research material, reflects this integration of melodic and rhythmic awareness. Rather than approaching accompaniment through predetermined responses, he adapted his playing to the unfolding character of the performance.

Another significant dimension of his practice was the relationship between vocal aesthetics and instrumental expression. Because of his knowledge of vocal music, Khan Sahib could engage with the stylistic and expressive requirements of the singer while translating those musical ideas into the technical language of the sarangi. This relationship is important because effective accompaniment does not require the sarangi player simply to duplicate every phrase produced by the vocalist. Instead, the accompanist must make continual musical judgements about when to follow, reinforce, respond, or allow space for the principal performer. Khan Sahib's practice illustrates how such decisions depend upon experience, listening, and a deeply internalised understanding of Hindustani performance conventions.

4.3 Compositional Contribution and Bandishes

In addition to his work as a sarangi performer and accompanist, Ustad Mehboob Khan Sahib's compositional activity represents an important dimension of his musical contribution. Within Hindustani classical music, a bandish provides a structured musical and lyrical framework through which the characteristics of a rāga are articulated while allowing possibilities for elaboration and improvisation (Wade, 1984). The original M.Phil. research documents and preserves notation of a number of compositions associated with Khan Sahib, including bandishes in Rāga Kedar and Rāga Maru Bihag. These materials provide evidence of his engagement with rāga, tāla, lyrical expression, and compositional structure.

Khan Sahib's compositions also demonstrate the relationship between creativity and musical transmission. When a bandish enters teaching and performance practice, it can become part of the repertoire transmitted between musicians. His compositions may therefore be understood not only as evidence of individual creativity but also as musical resources through which aspects of his artistic knowledge could continue among students and performers.

4.4 Professional Career, Broadcasting and Institutional Recognition

Ustad Mehboob Khan Sahib's professional career extended beyond the traditional settings of musical training and live performance into the expanding institutional environment of twentieth-century Indian classical music. A particularly significant aspect of this career was his association with All India Radio (Akashvani) and Doordarshan, India's national broadcasting institutions. Documentary materials examined during the research record Khan Sahib's association with All India Radio (Akashvani), where he worked as an approved artist, presenting sarangi performances and accompanying vocalists in classical music broadcasts. His appearances on Doordarshan further brought his musicianship into the sphere of televised cultural performance.

Khan Sahib's professional activity was not confined to broadcasting. The research documents his participation in music conferences, competitions, cultural festivals, and classical concerts across India, where he appeared both as a sarangi performer and as an accompanist. Such performance settings required considerable adaptability, particularly for an accompanist working with musicians representing different repertoires and stylistic traditions. His career consequently illustrates the mobility of musical knowledge across different performance environments rather than its confinement to a single institutional or gharana setting. The breadth of Khan Sahib's collaborations provides further evidence of this professional standing. The research records performances with prominent figures of Hindustani music, including Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali Khan, Begum Akhtar, Pandit Jasraj, Gangubai Hangal, Kishori Amonkar, Girija Devi, Pandit Bhimsen Joshi, Ustad Sabri Khan, Ustad Sultan Khan, Pandit Hariprasad Chaurasia, Pandit Shivkumar Sharma, Ustad Amjad Ali Khan, and Pandit Ravi Shankar, among others. The range of vocalists and instrumentalists represented in these collaborations is particularly significant because it indicates the versatility demanded of Khan Sahib as a sarangi musician working across different performance contexts. One especially revealing example emerges from the oral-history evidence concerning Begum Akhtar. In an interview conducted with Ustad Moinuddin Khan Sahib, Begum Akhtar was remembered as holding Mehboob Khan Sahib's accompaniment in particularly high regard. The testimony emphasises his sensitivity to the emotional direction of her singing and his ability to anticipate musical development without becoming intrusive. Rather than treating this recollection merely as praise, it provides insight into the qualities by which accompaniment was evaluated by musicians themselves: attentiveness, anticipation, emotional sensitivity, balance, and respect for the principal performer.

4.5 Pedagogy, Disciples and Musical Transmission

Ustad Mehboob Khan Sahib's contribution to Hindustani classical music extended beyond performance and composition to the teaching and intergenerational transmission of musical knowledge. The evidence gathered during the research indicates that his pedagogical approach was deeply connected with the *guru–shishya paramparā*. Musical education within this relationship was not understood simply as the acquisition of instrumental technique; rather, it involved sustained interaction between teacher and disciple through which musical knowledge, aesthetic judgement, discipline, and artistic values were gradually internalised.

A central feature of Khan Sahib's teaching philosophy was the importance of regular and disciplined *riyāz*. His students were encouraged to develop technical precision while simultaneously cultivating sensitivity to *sur*, *rāga*, rhythm, and musical expression. The research indicates that he did not emphasise technical display alone. Instead, tonal purity, balanced expression, careful listening, and understanding of the grammar of Hindustani classical music formed important elements of his pedagogical approach. His method of instruction was also described as individualised and practice-oriented. Teaching involved demonstration, repetition, observation, listening, and continuous correction, with instruction adapted to the abilities of individual disciples. Such an approach reflects the embodied character of musical transmission within the guru–shishya tradition: important aspects of performance are acquired not solely through verbal explanation or written notation but through repeated engagement with the guru's musical practice.

Importantly, Khan Sahib's understanding of musical education extended beyond musicianship itself. The research materials emphasise the value he placed upon humility, discipline, respect for the guru, dedication, and ethical conduct. Technical excellence and personal character were therefore not treated as entirely separate aspects of becoming a musician. Testimonies from disciples and fellow musicians similarly describe his teaching as combining rigorous *riyāz* with personal guidance and encouragement, shaping both musical abilities and professional attitudes. The continuity of this pedagogical legacy can be observed through the musicians associated with his teaching tradition. The research documents disciples including Ustad Munir Khan, Ustad Liaqat Ali Khan, Ustad Nazar Mohammad Khan, Ustad Noor Khan, and Padma Shri Ustad Moinuddin Khan, whose subsequent activities in performance and teaching contributed to the continuation of musical knowledge associated with their guru. Padma Shri Ustad Moinuddin Khan, in particular, represents an important continuation of this lineage through his work as a sarangi performer, teacher, and representative of the tradition. The oral-history evidence reinforces the significance of this teaching legacy. Musicians interviewed during the research repeatedly associated Khan Sahib with discipline, artistic sensitivity, dedication to the sarangi, and commitment to the preservation of traditional musical values.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that Ustad Mehboob Khan Sahib's musical legacy cannot be understood solely through his achievements as an individual sarangi performer. His career illustrates a broader process through which musical knowledge is performed, negotiated, transmitted, and preserved within Hindustani classical music. His activities as an accompanist, composer, teacher, and broadcast artist reveal the interconnected nature of individual musicianship and collective musical tradition. In this respect, his career provides a useful case for examining how the continuity of the sarangi tradition depends upon both inherited musical knowledge and the interpretive agency of individual musicians.

One of the most significant findings concerns the artistic complexity of sarangi accompaniment. Historical scholarship has established the close relationship between the sarangi and Hindustani vocal music, particularly the instrument's ability to engage with vocal melodic expression (Bor, 1987). Magriel's analysis similarly demonstrates that sarangi

performance draws extensively upon vocal musical principles while translating them through the particular technical and expressive possibilities of the instrument (Magriel, 2025). The evidence concerning Mehboob Khan Sahib extends this discussion by illustrating how these relationships operated within the practice of an individual accompanist. His attention to *sur*, *laya*, *tala*, phrasing, and the unfolding direction of vocal improvisation suggests that accompaniment required continuous musical judgement rather than passive reproduction.

A second important finding concerns the relationship between tradition and transmission. Khan Sahib's pedagogical practices demonstrate that the preservation of musical knowledge involves considerably more than maintaining repertoire. His emphasis on *riyāz*, listening, tonal accuracy, discipline, respect for the guru, and individualised instruction indicates that musical transmission encompassed aesthetic and ethical values alongside technical knowledge. This finding supports the broader understanding of the *guru–shishya paramparā* as an embodied pedagogical relationship in which aspects of musical knowledge are acquired through observation, repetition, interaction, and sustained practice. At the same time, Khan Sahib's career demonstrates that tradition should not necessarily be understood as something isolated from institutional or technological change. Bakhle (2005) has shown that modern Hindustani classical music developed through interactions among musicians, changing pedagogical structures, cultural institutions, and broader historical transformations. Khan Sahib's association with All India Radio and Doordarshan provides a particularly relevant example. Musical knowledge cultivated through interpersonal and lineage-based systems of training entered modern broadcasting environments, enabling classical performance to circulate among audiences far beyond the immediate concert setting. His career therefore illustrates the coexistence of traditional modes of musical transmission with modern institutions of cultural dissemination.

The findings also demonstrate the particular importance of oral history for reconstructing musical legacies of this kind. As Perks and Thomson (2016) emphasise, oral testimony provides access to remembered experience while simultaneously requiring attention to the interpretive character of memory. In the present study, interviews with musicians associated with Khan Sahib's tradition reveal aspects of his performance practice, teaching, professional relationships, and artistic personality that are not fully represented by institutional documentation alone. These testimonies do not replace documentary evidence; rather, when considered alongside photographs, certificates, recordings, musical notation, and other materials, they broaden the range of evidence through which his musical life can be understood. This relationship between memory and documentation also has implications for discussions of intangible cultural heritage. UNESCO's (2003) framework emphasises that performing arts, oral traditions, knowledge, and skills constitute forms of living heritage whose continuity depends upon transmission between generations. Khan Sahib's legacy illustrates this process at the level of an individual musical life. His contribution survives not only through institutional recognition or historical documentation but also through compositions, performance memories, pedagogical values, and the musical practices of those connected to his teaching lineage. By bringing these dimensions together, the present study contributes to scholarship on the sarangi

by shifting attention from the history of the instrument alone toward the musicians and relationships through which its knowledge is sustained. It also demonstrates the value of integrating musicological evidence with oral-history perspectives when examining artistic traditions that depend substantially upon embodied and interpersonal transmission. Ustad Mehboob Khan Sahib's career thus provides not only an important subject of musical documentation but also a lens through which broader questions of performance, memory, pedagogy, and cultural transmission in Hindustani classical music can be examined.

6. Conclusion

Ustad Mehboob Khan Sahib's contribution to Hindustani classical music extended beyond his accomplishments as an individual sarangi performer. Through an examination of his performance practice, accompaniment, compositional activity, professional career, and pedagogical legacy, this study has demonstrated how his musicianship contributed to the continuing transmission of the sarangi tradition. His career provides an important example of the ways in which individual musicians participate in sustaining musical knowledge across generations while simultaneously responding to changing professional and institutional environments. Ultimately, Ustad Mehboob Khan Sahib's legacy lies not only in the performances he gave or the recognition he received, but also in the musical knowledge that he transmitted. His work as a performer, accompanist, composer, and teacher demonstrates how an individual musician can participate in the preservation of a tradition through artistic practice and relationships with other musicians. Documenting such legacies contributes to a more inclusive understanding of Hindustani classical music by recognising the musicians whose artistry, teaching, and collaborative practices have sustained its traditions across generations.

References

- Bakhle, J. (2005). *Two men and music: Nationalism in the making of an Indian classical tradition*. Oxford University Press.
- Bor, J. (1987). *The voice of the sarangi: An illustrated history of bowing in India*. National Centre for the Performing Arts.
- Magriel, N. (2025). *Sarangi style in Hindustani music*. Indica Books.
- Neuman, D. M. (1990). *The life of music in North India: The organization of an artistic tradition*. University of Chicago Press.
- Perks, R., & Thomson, A. (Eds.). (2016). *The oral history reader* (3rd ed.). Routledge.
- Qureshi, R. B. (1997). *The Indian sarangi: Sound of affect, site of contest*. *Yearbook for Traditional Music*, 29, 1–38.
- Qureshi, R. B. (2007). *Master musicians of India: Hereditary sarangi players speak*. Oxford University Press.
- Ruckert, G. E. (2004). *Music in North India: Experiencing music, expressing culture*. Oxford University Press.
- Smith, L. (2006). *Uses of heritage*. Routledge.
- UNESCO. (2003). *Convention for the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage*.
- Wade, B. C. (1984). *Khyal: Creativity within North India's classical music tradition*. Cambridge University Press.