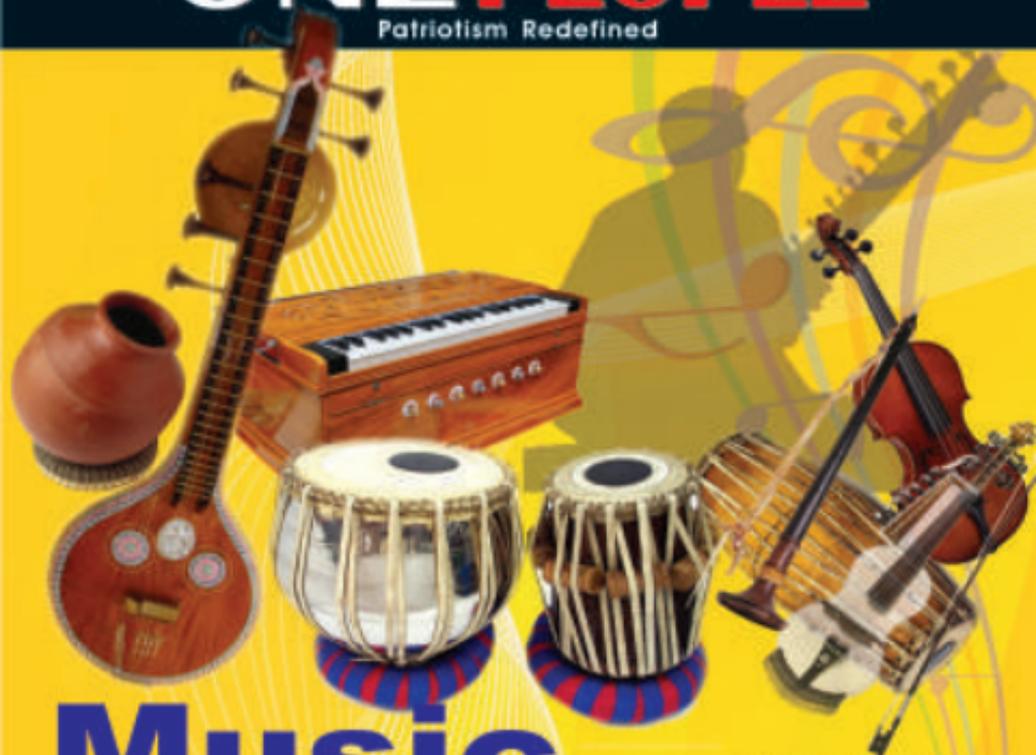


# ONE INDIA ONE PEOPLE

Patriotism Redefined



## Music

*Music and the new media – adapt or perish!*

*Of guns and guitars*

*Healing with music*

**KNOW INDIA BETTER**  
**Sound of Music**

**FACE TO FACE**

Dhanashree Pandit Rai  
Rita Ganguly



**Great Indians: Pandit Chidanand Nagarkar / Pandit Krishnarao G. Ginde / Jagjit Singh**

MORPARIA'S PAGE



# Contents

JANUARY 2015

VOL.18/6

**THEME:**  
Music



6

Morparia's page	2
Music in the air, everywhere! <i>V. Gangadhar</i>	5
Music and the new media – adapt or perish! <i>Vithal C. Nadkarni</i>	6
Piping hot servings of classical music <i>V. Ramnarayan</i>	8
Will 2015 be the year of the ghazal? <i>Narendra Kusnur</i>	10
Bollywood's musical affair <i>Akul Tripathi</i>	12
Of guns and guitars <i>Bidyut Kotoky</i>	14
The sound of money <i>Amarendra Dhaneshwar</i>	16

The Baul philosophy <i>Shoma A Chatterji</i>	18
---	----

Healing with music <i>Dr. M. Hariharan</i>	20
---	----

<b>Know India Better</b> Sound of Music <i>Kusum Mehta</i>	23
--	----

<b>Face to Face:</b>	39
----------------------	----

Dhanashree Pandit Rai: *E. Vijayalakshmi Rajan*

Rita Ganguly: *Shoma A. Chatterji*

**Features**

A war of ice and fire <i>Brig. Suresh Chandra Sharma</i>	44
---	----

An annual reunion <i>Tirtho Banerjee</i>	46
---	----

Write way! <i>A. Radhakrishnan</i>	48
---------------------------------------	----

And now, a pink auto service! <i>Rakhi Ghosh</i>	49
---	----

Book Review	51
-------------	----

<b>Columns</b>	52
----------------	----

Rural Concerns : *Bharat Dogra*

Economy : *Anuradha Kalhan*

Young India

**Great Indlans**



23

39

Dhanashree Pandit Rai



Pandit Chidanand  
Nagarkar



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# LETTER TO THE EDITOR

## “Refreshing magazine”

I found the magazine *One India One People* refreshing. The colourful and attractive cover page tempts one to pick it up and peruse the contents. The elaborate cover stories enhance my knowledge and make for good reading.

I must make a special mention of the series on great Indians, people who have shaped and done India proud, where I got to know hitherto unknown facets of their personality. Young India was entertaining too.

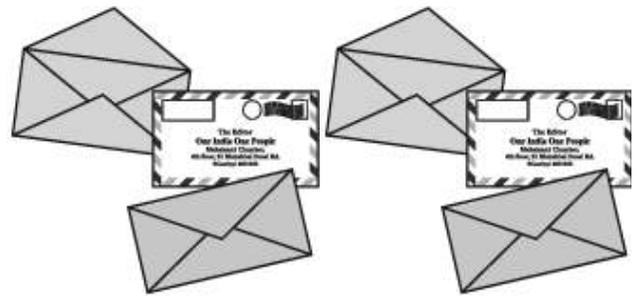
Other plus points are a good layout and good editing. I found the cartoon page humorous and the selection of photographs judicious. I wish the magazine would increase its number of pages and progressively add new features.

I wish it all the best.

– Uma Jayaraman, Pune

## “An excellent issue!”

Kudos to *One India One People* magazine for the well-produced, excellent Human Rights issue. It was an eye-opener to read the article on abolishing death penalty. Like most women in today’s India, I have been horrified by the frequent reports of sexual violence against women and have always felt that capital punishment would be too good for such offenders.



But reading this article really opened my eyes to why every life, no matter what the crime, is sacred. I am thankful to your magazine for carrying this article. The articles on rights of gays, and the Satyarthi article were also very interesting. It’s a matter of pride that Kailash Satyarthi won the Nobel peace prize this year. I live in Mumbai and really enjoyed Akul Tripathi’s article. I felt as though I was on a Mumbai darshan walk with the writer! All the rest of the articles were very informative too. The article ‘The brand confusion’ was very informative and one hopes the glitches in the pharma industry are fixed very soon. I enjoyed the Nature watch column for its very succinct presentation of the environment facts before us. I am sure you will continue to highlight issues as you have been doing so far, issues which no other publication seems to want to write about. Here’s wishing more power to your magazine.

– Sushma Chatterjee, Mumbai

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# Music in the air, everywhere!

*In South Indian Brahmin households, learning music was mandatory for both girls and boys and there was no escaping it, says V. Gangadhar. He did his best to follow this august tradition, till peer ridicule foiled his efforts.*

THE problem with being brought up in a 'music environment' is that everyone thought you too would sing, appreciate music, identify *ragas* and so on. If that did not happen, you were in trouble! Take my household for instance. Mother sang divinely. The three elder sisters had a music master to teach them, one aunt was proficient in playing the *veena*, another aunt on father's side had graduated to singing on stage.

In short, I belonged to what one would call a 'musical family'.

Everyone of us has studied literature where the Shakespeare chap wrote those 'immortal lines', 'The man that had no music in him was capable of this, that and worse including stratagems.....'. Look, a man may not be interested in music, but why call him names like 'stratagems'? What gems were they? But the tradition in Hindu Brahmin families was whether one liked it or not, one at least expected to learn music. A *bhagavathar* (music teacher) visited the house thrice a week to teach us (my three elder sisters and I) music.

At the time of this ordeal, I think I was around eight or nine. 'Catch' em young' was my parents' view on this issue. The 'Music Sir' arrived every Friday evening, taught us two sessions each on Saturdays and Sundays and greatly enjoyed his visits where his perks included enormous meals, endless cups of filter coffee, in-between snacks and *vethilai paku* (*paan* or betel leaves with all ingredients). Before the coaching began, he tested our voices. My sisters' voices were okay. He was certain that they would perform in *kacheris* (public platforms). When my turn came, I sang the first two lines of a popular film song. The *Bhagavathar* looked as though someone had socked him in the jaw with a Joe Louis punch.

"No, no film songs, they are cheap and vulgar", gasped the *Vadhyar*. "Something in classical music, expand a raga and then sing a *tukda* (light classical number)", he said. I

was delighted because it was my ambition to annihilate the learned *guru* with my own rendering of the *Karahara priya raga* which was supposed to be among the tougher *ragas*. *Vadhyar* looked at me doubtfully and nodded. I let go with a full-throated rendering of what I thought was the *Karahara priya raga*. *Vadhyar's* eyes became glassy, he took his head in his hands and moaned, "I am not feeling well, sudden headache", he muttered, and finished the lesson for the day.

The lessons continued but faced a new obstacle. Our drawing room where the music lessons were held was visible from the staircase. Our landlord's son and friends (around a dozen of them) who came to know about my music lessons assembled there and went on making faces at me. I often could not control my laughter despite stern looks from mother. Well, a couple of more pranks followed with the same disastrous results. My mother and grandmother explained to the *Vadhyar*, "Usually he sings very well. *Yaro kannai potirukal* (Someone has cast the evil eye on him)", and my music lessons ended. 'Ended' may not be the proper word, because music was everywhere and I could not avoid it. During the nine-day long *Navratri* festival, Brahmin homes organised the *Kolu* (arrangement of dolls), invited people to visit their homes and sing, and distributed tasty *prasadam*. The snacks were good but not the singing. Most of it was off-key, but you had to grin and bear it.

One could not avoid music. The films in those days were 'musicals' and the dialogues were mostly in songs. The films ran for long periods so that people could keep awake, say their prayers and go to bed. I remember watching a film *Aayiram thalai vaangi Apoova Sinthamani*, which went on for nearly five and a half hours and had around 42 songs.

Those were the days! ■



The writer is a well-known satirist.

# Music and the new media – adapt or perish!

*Indian music and musical traditions are at a crossroads with the emergence of the new media. Today, learning and dissemination of music is ably assisted by webcasts, live streaming and Skype, though illegal downloads have long become a way of life. Harnessing the new media constructively, while keeping the rights of the artistes and the recording industry in mind, is the right way to go. **Vithal C. Nadkarni** finds his way through this musical maze.*

**A**T a Jaipur concert last year, the Benares *gharana* maestros Rajan and Sajan Mishra asked members of the audience to desist from recording their performance. Everybody switched off their phones, except one cheeky fellow who asked the *Pundits* what their problem was when he was recording purely for his own personal and private pleasure! The singers retorted that while they felt flattered by the wannabe recordist's attention, they were also worried about music companies suing them if the recordings were shared and got downloaded on social media.

"Having released commercial recordings of *ragas*, we singers are contractually bound to prevent the illegal dissemination and duplication of tracks," Pandit Rajan Mishra said. "And since the downloads of the *ragas* were bound to sound similar to the commercially released versions, what if we were dragged to court by the recording companies for breach of contract?" he asked.

Was he exaggerating? Not really. Courts are taking an increasingly harsh view of the problem of pirated music and the economic damage it wreaks on creators of content and its distributors. An appellate court in the United States recently ruled that the *Recording Industry Association of America* was perfectly within its constitutional rights to sue a downloader of pirated music for \$222,000!

So, you don't have to be a mass downloader or serial offender to qualify, a researcher told the BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation). Someone who downloaded even a single movie or a music file was liable to be logged for punitive action! The Mishras' question adds yet another spin to the rapidly gyrating relationship between ancient music traditions and the brave new media. It's a relationship fraught with many positive spin-offs, and as many negative impacts. The question of ripped music, for example; of rampant digital piracy and extortionate loss of royalties. And the prospect of viral popularity for those lucky or savvy enough to leverage the

almost limitless opportunities of the World Wide Web at the opposite end.

One positive trend is the increasing use of webcasts by music *sabhas* for the benefit of *rasikas* who couldn't make it to the brick-and-mortar concert halls! Music honchos say live-streaming, with all its panoply of computers and hi-end cameras, is more expensive than a conventional webcast. This also enables broadcasters to embellish the content with greater value addition for listeners' satisfaction. In this, as in the earlier format of hard copies and CDs, novices and unknown musicians are likely to resort to self-financed or sponsored freebies. But branded artistes do tend to attract fees and premium placements. Similarly, one-time webcast and even films of concerts are creating the new trend of watching these virtual concerts in traditional performance halls along with like-minded *rasikas*.

Recently, your writer watched a well-filmed performance of the Patiala-Kasur *gharana* maestro, Pandit Ajoy Chakraborty, at the National Centre for the Performing Arts (NCPA), where the artiste took the listeners through the delectable intricacies of *Sabrang-Piya*, Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali Khan's compositions.

"It's a phenomenon that is both magical and can even be misleading," says Yojana Shivanand, the noted classical musician who has years of experience working with a major recording label. "It's like the proverbial *bhool-bhulayya* or the maze: Some musicians may have found success here," she adds. "But infinitely more are the numbers of artistes that may have tasted nothing or worse."

In this context, Shivanand recalls the words of the late Pandit Jitendra Abhisheki on his 60<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration; in the presence of his legendary cousin, *Bharatratna* Lata Mangeshkar, Pandit Abhisheki warned aspiring musicians to think twice before jumping headlong into a full-time music career: "Be prepared to be smoked out and hunted like hapless rabbits," he said in Marathi (*Saseholpat hote*).

“What Panditji said then seems to apply with greater force in today’s age of the wired world,” Shivanand explains. “Sure, there seems to be lots of action (and cameras), but numbers and statistics are notoriously difficult to obtain.” Her gut-feeling is that while there are lots of talented musicians making waves and doing all sorts of exciting experiments and presentations, it’s equally true we’re all waiting for the next Messiah: “We just don’t have the next Gangubai (Hangal) or the next Bhimsen (Joshi): such musicians are only born and not made; and the media, whether old or new, can at best play a facilitating role in show-casing them,” she said.

“The buzzword today is hype,” counters the connoisseur Ramdas Bhatkal, who in addition to being a rigorously trained classical musician, is also a pioneering publisher. “Publicity, whether of the conventional kind or of the innovative type, seems to be the killer app of today’s mediocratic (versus the older meritocratic) times,” Bhatkal elaborates.

On the flip side, the ongoing digital and mobile revolution has brought great benefits for listeners or the so-called *Kansens* (in contrast to the performer or *Tansens*); recently, a Florida-based connoisseur posted on Facebook a vintage recording of the late Gwalior-Agra maestro, the late Yeshwantbuwa Joshi. Within seconds there was world-wide buzz: One seasoned fan said that in his long listening career, he had never heard the compositions in the *raga allaiya bilawal* being sung by anybody else.

Equally alacritous was another fan’s response who provided the exact provenance of the composition; a commercial recording by Jitendra Abhisheki released in 1992 had indeed immortalised the fast (*drut*) composition created by the late Pandit Ratnakar Ramnathkar under the pen-name *Prem-rang*. And the digital debate went on much to the delight of the uploader. What was more, the commercially-produced recording of the song had already been uploaded in the public domain.

While all this may come as music to connoisseurs’ ears, we must also spare a thought for the more worldly issues such as copy-right infringement, right to royalty for creative work, and the larger financial implications for both the artistes’ fraternity and the recording industry.

Quite apart from this economic aspect of the digital media revolution is its impact on teaching and dissemination of music. “The time-honoured *gurukul* system is an ideal that most of us would love to emulate and re-create,” says Smita Wagh, who started out as a precocious protégé of Agra *gharana* and morphed into an established teacher herself. “But we also must be realistic about the prevailing economic and other exigencies.”

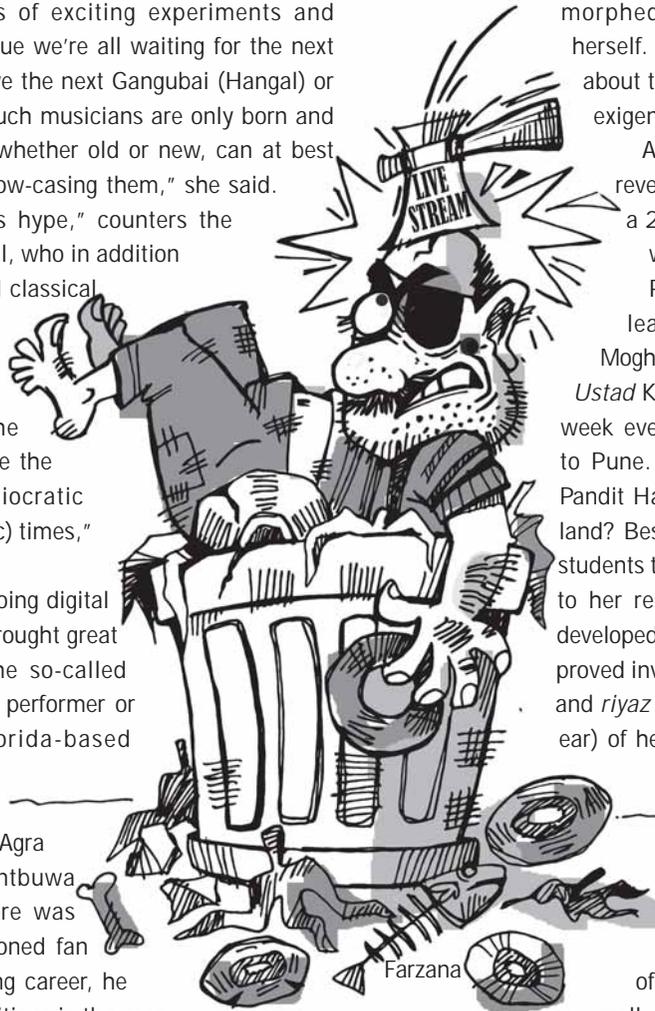
Also, what do you do when your revered octogenarian *guru* is himself a 21<sup>st</sup> century jetsetter? Smita Wagh went to learn from her master, Pandit Babanrao Haldankar, (who learned from the Jaipur doyenne Moghubai Kurdikar and the Agra veteran *Ustad* Khadim Hussain Khan) week after week even after he shifted from Mumbai to Pune. But what was she to do when Pandit Haldankar moved to Miss Liberty’s land? Besides, she had her own brood of students to guide. That’s when Skype came to her rescue. The software, which was developed for conversation over the internet, proved invaluable in safeguarding her *talim* and *riyaz* under the ever-watchful eye (and ear) of her *guru*!

Elsewhere, extensive research has shown that such virtual *guru-sishya* interactions do have a natural feel to them; they are also crucial in the evolution of imagination and enthusiasm as well as mastering of equipment and music. But a major downside was techno glitches and interruptions that led to literal and figurative disconnectedness.

Moral of this story was that one needs to be tech savvy to remain connected in these fast-changing times, to pursue timeless/traditional music. While it continues to thrive in *raga*-clouds and other digital archival *avatars*, most neophytes and wannabe performers also have to contend with a mixed or

Janus-faced prospect: lots of uncertainty laced with humungous, potential opportunity. ■

The writer is a senior consulting editor and columnist with the Times of India Group of Publications. He is also a fellow of the London-based 21<sup>st</sup> Century Trust and a recipient of the US-based Alfred Friendly Press Fellowship.



# Piping hot servings of classical music

*The Chennai music season perhaps has no parallel. In the month of December alone, a delectable feast of over 3,000 classical music and dance performances is organised at over 50 sabhas, where new talents are discovered, and established artistes return to their roots once again. There are changes today though, with young artistes trading quick excellence for depth and passion, feels V. Ramnarayan, but he also tells us why, despite everything, this show will always go on.*

It all started in 1928, when the Indian National Congress decided, when it met at Madras, to have some Carnatic music to educate and elevate the delegates. This was the genesis of the Madras Music Academy, the sage institution that confers on musicians what has come to be regarded as the highest honour in the field: the *Sangita Kalanidhi*. Some artistes regard this as greater than even the presidential awards from New Delhi, and many of them consider the blessings of their *gurus* the highest honour of all. This is one traditional value that movingly compensates for the rapid commercialisation of the arts in this part of the world, as elsewhere.

With that single act, the Congress also launched the phenomenon that the Chennai music season has come to be. It is arguably the most spectacular carnival in the world for music lovers. The sheer size and numbers of the month-long festival of Carnatic music that swamps the city during December every year have no equal anywhere, we are told by experts who have traversed the continents.

## The *sabha* – the catalyst

The ubiquitous *sabha*, the uniquely indigenous institution responsible for the growth and development of south Indian

classical music and dance, takes pride in showcasing the best talent available, packed into 3 or 4 concerts everyday for a period varying from 2 to 6 weeks. The honorary apex body, the Music Academy, for instance, conducts some 75 concerts from 15<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> December. The top ten *sabhas* of the city offer a similar number of programmes during the fortnight, which makes it around 750 concerts in the second half of

December. Add to this, 50 other *sabhas* organising concerts at the rate of two a day for a month, and we get 3000 more performances during December. In actual fact, the music season nowadays begins as early as 1<sup>st</sup>

November and often goes on until the end of January. The final number of concerts is a mind-boggling figure, isn't it?

The season caters to varied tastes and budgets. The morning and early afternoon concerts are all free. In the days before *sabhas* proliferated geometrically, the halls at the premier venues used to be filled to overflowing for these performances by talented youngsters including child prodigies. Some 25 years ago, when a whole crop of whiz kids arrived on the block, taking Chennai's audiences by storm, the organisers were often forced to install CCTVs in the lobbies



for those who could not get in. This is how we caught our first glimpse of today's established stars like Vijay Siva, Sanjay Subrahmanyam, Unnikrishnan, and Bombay Jayashri, a few years after the likes of E. Gayathri, Ravikiran and Sudha Ragunathan arrived on the scene. Today, the scene is different, and there are so many choices open to the itinerant *rasika* that full houses for these free performances are a rare sight, though the top stars featured in the ticketed concerts in the evening are paradoxically still a huge draw.

### A rare exception

The festival is still run on conservative lines, despite the presence of some western instruments adapted to Carnatic music and their flamboyant practitioners. The last concert of the day, for example, invariably closes at 9.30 pm, and if the musician happens to warm up slowly and is yet to peak, so be it. He must obey the organiser's stop watch. Though it is a complete mystery how the aberration was allowed, there was a spectacular exception in the 1960s in the form of Ravi Shankar's concerts, which were allowed beyond midnight, with the *sitar* maestro and his ebullient *tabla* partner on stage, Ustad Allah Rakha, wishing the listeners a happy new year.

### Where are the instrumentalists?

Carnatic music is perhaps one of the very few classical arts in the world practised by so many young frontline artistes. Most of the top vocalists today are in their forties if not younger, while the instrumentalists are probably even younger. Unfortunately, there are not many takers for instrumental solo concerts, even though we have quite a few brilliant exponents among us—flautists, violinists, *veena* and *chitraveena vidwans* and so on. This is in sharp, even stark, contrast to the scenario in the 1970s, when old masters like Lalgudi Jayaraman, T.N. Krishnan, N. Ramani, and M.S. Gopalakrishnan ruled the roost. Today, the best of our string and wind instrumentalists are mostly seen in accompanying roles in vocal concerts, despite efforts by small groups to resuscitate solo and duo *kacheris* by them.

### Reality shows, NRIs and the role they play

The emergence of youngsters on the concert platform has been facilitated by a profusion of talent spotting initiatives, mainly through reality shows on television. While these probably started with the best of intentions, they have now become mindless competitions to test the skill sets of young musicians, rather than foster depth and passionate pursuit of excellence, which devoted disciples of traditional *gurus* in the *gurukula* mode of oral transmission, had to undertake to achieve eminence in their field. As a result, while we have

scores of brilliant young musicians passing the most demanding tests of proficiency set by experts in the field with flying colours, they tend to fade out rather more rapidly than their seniors of a few years ago. The blame for this kind of competitiveness at the expense of depth must be shared by local as well as diasporic patrons of the arts, for clones of our reality shows have sprung up across the continents, wherever Indian music is celebrated.

This is not to take away credit from the extraordinary service NRI (Non-Resident Indian) impresarios and *sabhas* have been rendering in the nurturing of Carnatic music and Indian classical dance for half a century and more. Our arts owe a great debt of gratitude to our American cousins, aunts and uncles as well as Sri Lankan Tamils for their generous support. They have made music a worthwhile career to pursue and not a part time activity made secure by a well paid job. Local *sabhas* too have had to raise their remuneration substantially in recent years, though the artistes get paid really well mainly during the season and not through the year. Most musicians today own cars, while a scooter was their status symbol 30 years ago.

The season is made even more interesting and accessible by the number of lecture-demonstrations in the morning. The academic sessions of the Music Academy were the precursor to this growing trend, with a conscious effort by the organisers to offer programmes that explain theory and practice in *rasika*-friendly formats. These programmes on wide-ranging topics are increasingly popular, especially among westerners and NRIs home on vacation.

This year's season has started on a sombre note, with the passing away of *mandolin* wizard U. Shrinivas, and octogenarian *Sangita Kalanidhi* Nedunuri Krishnamurti. Shrinivas's disciples including younger brother Rajesh, and Nedunuri's *sishyas* like the Malladi Brothers, will surely pay their homage to their *gurus* in a fitting manner. Just as it did a decade ago, when M.S. Subbulakshmi passed away and the tsunami wrought destruction everywhere, the season will go on. It must. ■

The writer has been the editor-in-chief of *Sruti*, India's leading monthly on the performing arts, for over eight years. In addition to editorials and critical comment, he has done numerous profiles and interviews featuring musicians, dancers, music administrators and institutions over the years. He has also edited a few books on Carnatic music, including one on the charismatic vocalist G.N. Balasubramaniam. A former cricketer at the national level, he is also a columnist and author of books on cricket. His semi-autobiographical work, *Third Man*, is due to be released soon.



### Maxim

*There is a higher court than courts of justice and that is the court of conscience. It supercedes all other courts.*

– Mahatma Gandhi

# Will 2015 be the year of the *ghazal*?

*There was a time in the 1970s and 1980s when ghazal singers were very popular, with people preferring this genre over Bollywood music. But ghazals soon went out of fashion, though Narendra Kusnur sees signs of revival today, with lots of new singers on the stage. They will sing in a new chapter in 2015, he hopes.*

ON 29 November 2014, a unique *ghazal* concert *Ghazal Harmony* was held at Mumbai's Nehru Centre auditorium. While it was led by senior artiste Pankaj Udhas and presented by well-known stage personality Salim Arif, the highlight was that it featured younger singers like Tauseef Akhtar, Runa Rizvi, Sudeep Banerjee, Pooja Gaitonde, Neha Rizvi and Shruti Pathak. "A new era has begun in the world of *ghazals*," Udhas declared.

If one thought a decade ago that *ghazals* had died as a genre, there seems to be some sudden hope within the fraternity of late. Besides a large number of younger singers, there has been an increase in the number of festivals. While *Khazana*, organised by Udhas at Mumbai's Trident hotel has become a regular annual feature largely comprising established artistes, newer events like *Ghazal Bahaar* are providing a platform to both middle-rung and upcoming artistes.

The next edition of *Ghazal Bahaar*, to be held in Mumbai in January 2015, will feature Ashok Khosla, Chandan Das, Ghansham Vaswani, Radhika Chopra, Anurag Sharma and Tauseef Akhtar, among others. As Tauseef says, "The way things are going, *ghazals* are set to make a comeback in 2015."

Besides festivals, many one-off concerts are being held too. Udhas is doing a series of shows to promote his latest album *Khamoshi Ki Awaaz*, and recently, singer Sraboni Chaudhury had an event to mark the late Begum Akhtar's birth centenary.

Only time will tell whether the coming year will bring back the *ghazal* movement. And even if there is a comeback, will it be as big as the wave one witnessed in the 1980s? Even though there are many newcomers and more events, the genre faces a few challenges. But before looking at them, it would be essential to understand the evolution of *ghazals* in the country.

## A brief history of *ghazal*

In the pure sense, a *ghazal* consists of a series of rhyming couplets, where each couplet is independent of each other in

meaning, but similar in structure. Each couplet is called a *sher* and the rhyming words are called the *qafiya* and *radeef*. The lines of the *sher* must have the same metre. If they do not have rhyming couplets and use the concept of free verse, the piece is called a *nazm*.

While *ghazals* have existed since the 12<sup>th</sup> century, it was only in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries that they became popular among select audiences, thanks to classical poets like Mirza Ghalib, Mir Taqi Mir, Momin Khan Momin, Dagh Dehlvi and Bahadur Shah Zafar. Those days, *ghazals* were heard live in courts of kings or in private gatherings.

When music began to be recorded in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, artistes began recording *ghazals* too. They were even used in film music. While singers K.L. Saigal, Talat Mahmood, Lata Mangeshkar and Mohammed Rafi sang this form regularly, music director Madan Mohan became famous for his *ghazal* compositions like *Yoon hasraton ke daag* and *Unko yeh shikayat hai* (from *Adalat*) and *Woh bhooli dastaan* (from *Sanjog*).

Most *ghazals* were written in chaste Urdu and were thus admired more by those who understood the language thoroughly. Besides being used in films, they also found a place in non-film recordings. While Master Madan and Begum Akhtar earned a name in India, Amanat Ali Khan, Habib Wali Mohammed, Noor Jehan and Mallika Pukhraj recorded them in Pakistan.

From the 1960s onwards, newer styles found their way in films, and *ghazal* began being increasingly recorded in the form of non-film music. Concerts and private *mehfils* also provided a platform for singers, and during this phase, Begum Akhtar became a huge name in *ghazals*, and was the single biggest artiste in India, till she passed away in 1974. Simultaneously, Pakistan witnessed the rise of Mehdi Hassan, whose 1964 song *Gulon mein rang bhare*, written by Faiz Ahmed Faiz, became a rage. Soon, other singers like Rajendra and Nina Mehta in India, and Ghulam Ali in Pakistan, began giving regular concerts.

### The ghazal wave

Till the mid-1970s, *ghazal* singers used traditional instruments like the harmonium, *sarangi* and *tabla* for accompaniment. But when Jagjit and Chitra Singh were promoted as the next stars on the *ghazal* horizon, the format started using other instruments like the guitar and keyboards. The phenomenal success of the couple's 1976 album *The Unforgettables*, featuring the songs *Baat niklegi toh phir*, *Sarakti jaaye rukh se naqaab* and *Raat bhi neend bhi*, was said to be the turning point in the history of *ghazals*.

A few reasons can be attributed to the sudden craze for the genre. To begin with, many singers entered the fray. These included Talat Aziz, Udhas, Penaz Masani and Anup Jalota, who later began concentrating on *bhajans*. Secondly, instead of the complex poetry that the old-timers chose, the newer lot preferred simpler words by younger poets, with Jagjit himself playing a major role in reaching out to the masses.

While earlier *ghazals* focused more on classical styles, the genre now used instruments which made them sound close to film music. Music companies Music India and HMV went out of their way to promote *ghazals*. Most important, the period from 1977 onwards saw a decline in quality of Hindi film music, and audiences switched to *ghazals* as an alternative.

The *ghazal* wave lasted almost a decade. Plenty of new albums were released, and concerts were filled to capacity. Bhupinder-Mitali, Chandan Das, Rajkumar Rizvi, Ahmed Hussain-Mohammed Hussain and Hariharan also came in, and there was special interest in the music of old-timers Vithal Rao and Madhurani. Shanti Hiranand and Rita Ganguly carried forward the legacy of their *guru* Begum Akhtar, and Indian audiences got exposed to Pakistani singers like Farida Khanum, Iqbal Bano and Nanyara Noor.

### Why the decline?

Sadly, the glory days didn't last. Too many singers tried to cash in on the wave, and in a bid to reach out even further to the masses, quality was adversely affected. The joke doing the rounds was that anyone with a harmonium and a shawl called himself a *ghazal* singer.

With melody returning to Hindi film music in the late 1980s and early 1990s, thanks to composers like Anand-Milind and Nadeem-Shravan, audiences went back to the movies, and *ghazals* took a back seat. Some new singers like



Legendary *ghazal* singer Begum Akhtar

Roopkumar and Sonali Rathod, Somesh Mathur and Mohammed Vakil came in, and Sufiana singers Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan and Abida Parveen sang *ghazals* too. But overall, the genre went out of fashion. When music videos became big in the mid-1990s, the focus was on Indipop, and *ghazals* got only a small amount of airplay. On the concert scenario, Jagjit and Udhas were the only singers who drew packed halls. And that's something that continued till a couple of years ago, till Jagjit's death in 2011.

### Hope of revival

With this background in mind, it is heartening that so many youngsters are active today. Yet, they face a few challenges. To begin with, younger audiences do not understand the nuances of *ghazals* the way the earlier ones did, and there is no concrete effort to educate them either. Secondly, music companies are by and large not promoting the genre, and even the number of new releases is low. Thirdly, the masses continue to be obsessed with Bollywood.

The heartening thing, of course, is that the level of activity is increasing slowly but steadily. Even if one doesn't see a wave, the water is flowing in the right direction. ■



The writer has been a music critic and columnist for over two decades. He has covered both Indian and international music extensively, and enjoys various genres like Hindustani classical, Carnatic, *ghazals*, old film music, regional music, western classical, rock, pop and jazz. He has also been involved with the music industry as a label manager with EMI Music India, and as a corporate trainer with Reliance TimeOut books and music stores.

### Aarogyam

Zinc is one of the most important minerals that our body needs and recent researches suggest that it contributes to our brain's health too. Low levels of zinc have been found in people suffering from Alzheimer's. One can get it from almonds, peanuts, pine nuts, cashews and sunflower and pumpkin seeds. Chicken and turkey too are good sources of zinc.

# Bollywood's musical affair

*Bollywood is nothing, if not musical. In fact, music is almost the raison d'être of Bollywood films. And what a varied selection it serves up, marvels Akul Tripathi. He traces the history of sound in Bollywood music, its manner of dissemination, global impact, and how this music offers something for everyone.*

A hundred year old industry with an exponential growth rate in number of movies produced, Indian cinema has come a long way from the single print *Raja Harishchandra* produced and directed by the inimitable Dada Phalke. With over 1500 feature films certified by the Censor Board of Film Certification in 2012, it makes for a cold hearted, cut-throat approach to concise anything about it within the scope of one article. Most especially music - which has been the appetiser and the dessert, if not also the main course in the elaborate *thali* of offerings that Indian movies lay out so generously and earnestly.

## The evolution of the sound of Hindi film music

Even when restricting the discussion to just Bollywood - the aspirational endearment styled after its big brother, Hollywood - it envelops the scope of sound movies produced since the first 'talkie' *Alam Ara* debuted at the Majestic Cinema in Bombay in 1931. With over 200 movies being released every year, Bollywood's affair with music is intimate to the point of being indistinguishable.

The introduction of sound in movies, unleashed into the film medium, the millennia old Indian culture of orality that predates most civilisations. Song as part of dramatic expression has a two thousand year old history in Sanskrit theatre. Interestingly, while silent films could not incorporate song and music in the narrative, these were often added to the screening of silent films by means of a live band in the theatres, often one that included singers.

From a Western perspective, Bollywood's liberal use of song in movies has often been criticised as unrealistic, made further melodramatic due to the playback singing which the actor lip syncs, the elaborate dance sequences and abrupt location changes. However, with roots in this strong oral culture, music and song have the expressive equivalence of speech, and the 'break' felt by westerners is for the Indian viewer, an added impromptu musical feast and a barely noticeable departure.

## The inspiration

The music in Indian cinema, particularly in the early days, stemmed from the same, age-old muses that the stories and plots derived inspiration from. The classics and the classical music tradition (Carnatic, Hindustani and the folk songs), were the first to find voice in cinema. Parsi, Marathi and urban theatre along with the Bengali *jatra* cast its glance on the style and substance of movies and the accompanying musical influences followed. Some of the earliest movies were filmed stage plays. By the mid-1930s, Bollywood had started experimenting with Western instruments, harmony and orchestration. This spirit of borrowing, including and creating from various sources had never found expression in the norm and custom dominated classical musical fields, and its acceptance and appreciation by the cinema audience opened vistas never before explored.

And then in 1934 began the first step towards commercialisation of Hindi film music, when the first gramophone records were produced and played on radio. Proving to be a burgeoning commercially lucrative industry, the fame and fanfare and the near divine status that film stars acquired in a country starved for heroes, the 'thirsty for new' cinema industry, by the 1940s, had begun to display an exotic and eclectic array of styles, with songs being written in jazz, as waltzes, or in the style of other Western and also Latin American popular genres.

Quite unsurprisingly, continuing in what is now the first knee-jerk response Indians are habituated to offer towards whatever they feel threatening their way of life, they boycotted and banned it. The in-vogue hybrid style of film songs offended and continues to offend the cultural purists. Generations have grown up being reminded of, and reprimanded for indulging their aural senses to the 'vulgar' insinuations offered on a platter by the errant and unscrupulous vagabonds of Bollywood.

## The black era for film music

Music, believed its harshest critics, made a film

commercial and the opium of the uneducated masses, as opposed to the 'art' cinema which appeals to the urban elite and intelligentsia. Perhaps the roots of this class-based divide goes right back to the 40's and Satyajit Ray's essays on cinema, and continued by various others through the subsequent decades. Yet, so intricately woven into cinema was music that even today, despite the many differences between parallel art cinema and commercial movies, the simplest marker for an 'art' movie or a 'serious' film which does not offer the *masala* fare of commercial cinema is the absence of songs.

In 1952, the attack on Hindi film music escalated from the domestic and literary to the government level, on the back of the Nehruvian ideology seeking to raise the standards of the masses and clinging to pure, Indian traditions. B. K. Keskar, the then Minister for Information and Broadcasting in a zealous attempt to cleanse airwaves of film songs, restricted the government run All India Radio (AIR) from broadcasting film music. As is with almost everything, a demand will find supply, and listeners merely tuned to Radio Ceylon which would broadcast Hindi film songs. With this workaround in place, the impasse could only end one way - Keskar reinstated film songs on the airwaves in 1957.

Like it is with any prohibition, all this did was increase the craving for that which was denied. The golden era of the 40s presided over by the likes of Naushad Ali, Khwaja Khurshid Anwar and Rajeshwar Rao, transformed into the unforgettable 50s and 60s with stalwarts like S. D. Burman, O. P. Nayyar, Madan Mohan, Hemant Kumar, Khayyam and Shankar Jaikishen, enthraling a nation struggling with post independence blues and frequent wars. Moving on into the 70s and 80s R. D. Burman, Bappi Lahiri and Jatin-Lalit brought about a strong Western flavour. The 90s and 2000s came to be dominated by A. R. Rahman, Shankar-Ehsaan-Loy, Anu Malik, Salim-Sulaiman amongst others.

### The technological revolution, music and piracy

Meanwhile, the technological revolution in the 80's, was revolutionising music. The audio cassette did to music what colour did to TV. From a popular medium which could wilfully be consumed only by the elite or those lucky to have friends and family with a good voice, the cassette made it possible to own a very well rendered copy of film music and play it on demand. And soon, along came the Sony Walkman, and music whether it was on the airwaves or not, could always be carried around in the pocket.

Economics could not be far behind such a major breakthrough and every arrangement related to music within a decade underwent a paradigm shift. Film songs achieved massive sales ranging from 10 lakh cassettes for

unsuccessful films to crores of cassettes for successful ones. The enormity of these numbers can only be gauged by understanding that these are just official figures. Pirated cassettes stood at 95% of official market in 1986 to 40% of official market in 2001. The zeroes in the combined numbers are just mind-boggling.

The introduction of the CD was thought to only galvanise this industry further, but the 2000s saw the industry crash. While some see this as a corrective of the bubble that formed in the 90s with music companies engaged in bitter warfare to gain market share, the proliferation of the internet and the availability of larger quantity of tracks, simply through the much compressed MP3 files, had a significant say in the decrease in sales volumes. An increase in audiovisual consumption, particularly on TV and through ripping from the film print has also been offered as a reason for decline in sale of audio-only products.

In these turbulent times, the biggest reprieve to the industry came through 'mobile music' and 'license digital distribution'. The 2000s and continuing since has seen a stringent look by the bigger companies over copyright violations with entire departments being set up to address this issue and ensure that every usage of copyright is paid for. This is a typical reaction in an industry where the dominant sales are from revenue from ringtone sales through mobile device providers, than sale of the original song itself.

Unlike genre-based following in the Western world with people veering towards pop, rock or some other genre, all sectors of Indian society have people who are avid followers of film music. That film musicians have unabashedly borrowed from every genre and style of music there is and provided it in the mix would definitely be an influencing factor here. This is not to say that there is a culture where certain composers are followed more avidly or preferred more by a certain section of the population than others. In an endearing manner, the strictest critic of film music will on a good day and in an amiable mood, confess to having at least some songs which meet his taste!

And this is the greatest achievement of film music – to serve something of taste to every one of this country's varied palette and keep all who devour and patronise it satisfied – irrespective of language or dialect - while still leaving them

hungry for more. No matter what it is that you believe unites India - cricket, scams or English - everything in the country finds its expression through film music. After all, *Gaana aaye ya na aaye, gaana chahiye!* ■



The writer is a media professional and freelance writer.

# Of guns and guitars

*The Northeast region of India has a strong culture of music, starting from legends like Lou Majaw and Zubeen Garg, to myriad bands like Cleave. But the sound of their music is often lost in the brutal cacophony of armed conflicts. Assamese filmmaker **Bidyut Kotoky** recently travelled across the eight Northeast states to film the region's musical legacy, and unearthed many and often poignant vignettes, while also re-connecting with his roots. Youngsters here are truly using music to change the canvas of despair and anguish, into one of hope and peace, he writes.*

THE idea for my film *Guns and Guitars* came to me on a casual monsoon morning in Mumbai, while I was accompanying Lou Majaw, legendary rock artiste of Northeast India, to a shop selling musical instruments. The shop owner happened to mention that a very large percentage of his customers belong to the music loving Northeast region of the country. This set me thinking and I wondered aloud to Lou about this paradox – while the choicest of alcoholic beverages are easily available in the neighborhood wine shop in the Northeast, for something as basic as guitar strings, the large number of musicians are dependent on music shops from outside the region! Maybe there's another story hidden here, but that is for another time.

## Lou Majaw – a musical force majeure

For the past 40 odd years now, Lou has been organising an annual concert on May 24, Bob Dylan's birthday, and now this has become somewhat of an occasion in itself. During our drive back, as we were discussing the music scenario in the Northeast region, I asked Lou about this concert and his thoughts behind this unique way of paying respect to his idol. He said that one day, way back in the 1970s, he felt a strong urge to thank Mr. Dylan for the way his songs had touched Lou's life, and rather than writing him a postcard, thought of thanking him with a birthday concert. Since the concert was very popular with the local audience, he was requested to repeat it the next year and the year after and the trend continues till date, and in 2011, he celebrated Dylan's birthday by inviting a rock group from each of the eight Northeast states to play with him in the concert.

## The need to document Northeast music

More often than not, the Northeast finds a mention in the national media for all the wrong reasons – when there is a bomb blast, an ambush, an economic blockade, a drug haul and so on. With no mention or focus on the positive energies

in the region, the default focus has been on the negative energies. For years, I have been troubled by this and have tried to bring out various, lesser known and more positive side of the region through my films. The above mentioned discussion with Lou, the upcoming concert, and the unusual proliferation of music and bands in the region triggered a thought process in me, and *Guns and Guitars* was born.

With this film, we travelled through all the eight Northeast states, in an attempt to understand the land and her people. This journey gave us an excuse to look at what gave shape to the voice and music of the land, its cultural and socio-political milieu, while talking to the kid singing in the local pub and the budding rock bands from in and around, catching up with the man on the street, sharing a few thoughts with music fans young and old, and trying to understand how times have changed or not at all!

## Travelling through the states

In Mizoram, meeting with my father's old driver was an emotional moment. Mr. Lalhmingliana, whom we fondly address as *Kapu* (uncle, in Mizo language) was almost like our family member. And as an ex-rebel of *Mizo National Front*, he does have an interesting past. When we interviewed him for our film, he recollected how in the late 1960s, they used to fight the Indian army during the day and used to sing Jim Reeve's *This world is not my home* once back in their hideout!

Manipur has the dubious distinction of having the highest number of insurgent groups in the Northeast. I was once told that the government employees - including the police - often have to pay 'tax' to 29 different extremist organisations when they get their salaries. Amidst this, we met the rock band from Imphal, *Cleave*, for our film. We found them jamming with a popular Bollywood number. "But isn't Hindi supposed to be banned in Manipur?" we asked them. "Yes, it is", they replied. So what will happen if an insurgent group finds out that they are playing a Hindi number? "Well, we could be shot", was their matter of fact reply!

*Cleave* is a 'death metal' group. In a place where you 'get' electricity for an average of three hours on a good day, how do they manage to practice with all their plugged in instruments? This is a problem, they agreed. For practice, they have to depend on generators. And in a state where 'economic blockade' is a way of life (often they are cut off from the rest of the country for months due to the blockade of the connecting highways by different groups of the neighboring state on one or the other pretext – and of course, till date there is no railway connectivity to the state!), getting a regular supply of fuel is also a challenge. Often petrol and diesel is sold in the black market at four times the price prevalent in the rest of the country. The group members of *Cleave* told me that many a time they have stood all night in a queue just for that one or two litres of fuel, which they use to start the generator, so that they can play their music!



**Lou Majaw (centre) with members of different bands in Shillong**

### The unique Music Task Force

'Every Naga can use a gun and everyone can also use a guitar', says Dr. Nicky Kire, elected representative and advisor to Nagaland's *Music Task Force*, when he was talking to us during our sojourn in this beautiful state of Nagaland. Paradoxical although he may have sounded, he was speaking the truth. After all, we were in the land which has witnessed one of the oldest unsolved insurgency problems in the world. And it is also the only state of the country to have a wing of a ministry dedicated to music – viz., *Music Task Force*. In a place where it is not uncommon to find youngsters lured by the gun for an alternative form of income and livelihood due to the absence of proper infrastructure to earn an honest living, the thought of dedicating a ministry to develop the music industry to provide that very alternative is quite a revolutionary idea indeed! And they do have an abundance of local talent to make that idea a roaring success. For example, the examiners from the United Kingdom, who visited Dimapur's music school *Hope Centre for Excellence* (affiliated to the Royal school of England), had observed that the Centre is producing results which can be matched by only two music schools of London!

### Make music instead of war

In Assam, the biggest music super star of the region and a dear friend, Zubeen Garg (yes, of the hit song *Ya Ali* fame), shared with us how the news of separatist organisation United Liberation Front of Assam's bomb blast during the Independence Day celebrations in 2004 in Dhemaji town, which killed 18 school kids, shook him. He composed a song overnight, flew to Guwahati (from Mumbai) next morning, and led a protest

with that song decrying the horrific incident.

On another occasion, the young kids playing in the Assamese band *D'luzion* confided in us, "Everybody seems to have a reason...even the people responsible for the bomb blasts claim to have a reason, we don't really understand all this, we just feel bad. This can't be the way to achieve something!" They continued, "The things that we can't express in words, we try to express with our music..."

The journey with *Guns and Guitars* has indeed been an eye opening and an enriching experience; whether to learn about the rare and shocking instance in our history when India air bombed her own citizens (the 1966 Indian Air Force bombing of Aizawl, Mizoram) or visiting the home of the legendary folk singer Menchuka - in the last Indian town on the Indo-China border in north Arunachal Pradesh - and hear her sing of plaintive tales in a voice that quivers like the cold wind that blows against the mountain, or visiting the village in the midst of nowhere in Meghalaya that practices the wonderful custom of dedicating an individual 'tune' to every child instead of giving them a pet name...yes, certain things in life can't be described adequately in words, you need to experience it.

Hopefully, you will agree with me when you get the chance to experience the same through our film, *Guns and Guitars – a musical travelogue*. ■

The writer is a film-maker and a reluctant writer, whose sole objective for writing is to get his readers curious to watch his films. His documentary *Bhramoman Theatre – where Othello sails with Titanic* won a special mention in the 53<sup>rd</sup> National Film Awards. For his debut feature film in Assamese, *Ekhon Nedekha Nadir Xipare (As the River Flows)* he won the 'best script award' for the period 2010-2012 at the Assam State Film Awards. The film also won awards at the 2013 Washington DC *South-Asian Film Festival* and the 2014 North Carolina *South Asian Film Festival*. Since the last 3 years he has been busy with his feature length documentary *Guns and Guitars – a musical travelogue*, which is in its final stage of post production. Made with self-raised funds, the film will be ready for release next year.



# The sound of money

*There was a time when music circles were the toast of cities like Mumbai, a platform for classical music lovers to enjoy live performances. But with increasing commercialisation, most music circles have folded up. Today, while the senior artistes continue to perform and earn well, the rest of the performers have been left high and dry. The need of the hour is a more equitable sharing of the available 'pie' if we want classical music to survive and sustain, says Amarendra Dhaneshwar.*

**C**LASSICAL music, till the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, was restricted to the privileged classes comprising royalty, aristocrats and landlords. By the second and third decades of the century, common people could get access to music through 78 rpm commercial discs, All India Radio broadcasts, as well as ticketed classical music performances and conferences (as festivals were called in those days).

In the 1930s started the music circles, which ran their activities through annual subscriptions. In Bombay, circles like *Kalyan Gayan Samaj* and *Suburban Music Circle* were set up in the early 1930s, and they have managed to survive despite heavy odds. *Dadar Matunga Social Club*, which has now been re-christened *Dadar Matunga Cultural Centre*, was established in 1953. The *Vile Parle Music Circle* was started in 1957 and the first concert was given by the then reigning queen of Hindustani music, Kesarbai Kerkar, who charged a princely sum of ₹ 1200 for her performance to that circle, which had an annual subscription of ₹ 12 for one person and ₹ 20 for a couple. The circles could manage their affairs and yet feature musicians of the calibre of Bhimsen Joshi, Ravi Shankar, Vilayat Khan, Halim Jaffer Khan, Bismillah Khan, Hirabai Badodekar, as well as other lesser known but highly talented artistes. The word 'sponsorship' did not exist in the lexicon of music organisers or artistes in those days.

## The death of music circles

The scene began to change in the 1970s. In a city like

Mumbai, some music organisers began to solicit sponsorship for their programmes and their efforts met with instant initial success. The immediate result was the steady hike in the fees charged by the musicians. Those who were charging a few thousands (generally a four figure amount) began to demand a five figure honorarium. This trend began to affect the economics of concert organisation. The music circles, with their limited resources, could not gather enough funds to fulfill the expectations of the so called big artistes. This, in turn, decimated their capacity to register fresh members or retain the existing members. They were thus caught in a vicious circle. Many music circles have folded up and those who have managed to survive are leading a precarious existence.

The death or emasculation of music circles has radically changed the economics of concert organising. The artistes who spend their life time over rigorous *riyaz* expect a fat or respectable remuneration depending on their standing in the fast expanding concert market. They tend to compare themselves to glamorous film stars, playback singers and cricketers.

In a democratic society, there is no bar on expectations, but the harsh reality is totally different. Classical music does not command the price which the artistes think is their due. Over the years, and particularly since the decline of music circles, it has become an unwritten rule that classical music is available to the auditor or recipient for free. Can one think



Pt. Ravi Shankar



Pt. Bhimsen Joshi



Ustad Bismilla Khan

### Indian artistes in poverty and a Bill which will change that

WHEN news flashed about the poverty that Bharat Ratna Ustad Bismillah Khan lived in – he had to write to then Human Resources Development Minister Kapil Sibal about not having money to pay his rent, causing Sibal to pay the *shehnai* legend's rent for a full year – India as a nation was shocked.

Apart from the Ustad, others like Khan Mastana (who was Mohammed Rafi's co-singer in the patriotic song *Watan ki raah mein*, died a beggar at the Haji Ali *dargah*) and *ghazal* and playback singer Mubarak Begum (through the 1950s and 60s, she worked with the best music directors in the film industry, collaborating with S.D. Burman, Shankar Jaikishan and Khayyam for movies that starred legends like Sunil Dutt, Nargis and Rajendra Kumar), have lived in poverty. Who hasn't heard of the song *Itni shakti hame dena daata* which is an anthem at many school assemblies, but its creator Kuldip Singh ended up in a Mumbai slum! Doubtless, there are many other lesser-known, but equally talented musicians who are struggling to eke out a living in a society which remembers and honours talents only till their last hit or performance.

Under the circumstances, the Copyright Amendment Bill 2012, which defines the author of copyright as its owner, and secures his lifelong right to royalty over the work, was a welcome legislation. The Bill ensures that every time anyone uses an artiste's work, he or she gets a share in the profits. Under the copyright law so far, filmmakers and producers would enter into a contract with lyricists, composers and singers, buying off their works in exchange for a pittance. While artistes would end up in penury, film producers would sell these works to business interests, including music companies and telecom firms, making lifelong profits in which artistes had no share. The 2012 amendment corrected this anomaly by amending the archaic Copyright Act of 1957 and making creator king. It defines the author of copyright as its owner, and secures his right to royalty over the work.

The amendment ends the era of indiscriminate remixing of hit songs and says no cover versions (remakes) can be made till six years of the creation of the work. Piracy has been made punishable with two years imprisonment and fine. The Bill also guarantees exclusive rights to performers like snake charmers, jesters and conjurers, mandating payment of royalty to them every time their performance is used for commerce. Performers will also have moral rights.

There is a caveat though; a two-year waiting period before royalty can be claimed, so that the cost involved in creating and publicising a song can be recovered. This is still a work in progress, but definitely a step in the right direction. ●

– One India One People

of entering a cinema hall without being charged an entrance fee? Is it possible to watch a one-day international in a stadium without being charged for the entry? Then why do people raise their eyebrows when a classical music show is ticketed even reasonably? The mental make-up of the audience has compelled the organisers to waive entrance fees, which has caused a major upset as far as raising resources for music concerts is concerned. The entry of so called event managers into the field has further spoiled the atmosphere. Event managers as well as the media in general tend to look upon classical music as mere entertainment, which it is not. It is a serious art which needs serious treatment. The presence of event managers has further pushed the fees of the so called star artistes to unaffordable limits.

### An unhappy situation for a classical art

Sponsorship is nothing else but subsidising music programmes. Subsidy for whom? The young and aspiring musicians, or the established ones who tend to corner all the available assignments? This is one field where there is no retirement. Artistes go on performing even when they are past 80. With a number of teaching institutions producing so many talented and competent artistes, there is a deplorable dearth of performance opportunities for them.

This inevitably breeds frustration. There are pools and cartels of a few musicians who tend to grab most of the big ticket events. Even celebrated musicians indulge in subtle or not so subtle arm twisting to solicit programmes for their progeny, and the organisers easily give in to the emotional blackmail. Leave aside ordinary young musicians, their pupils too get frustrated because of this attitude. Such an unhappy situation forces the neglected musicians to start their own organisations. They struggle to raise their own resources and present either their own programmes or invite other organisers/musicians who are prepared for a 'barter' concert arrangement. This is not at all a happy situation for a classical art. But this is the reality today. Ultimately, the question boils down to the simple issue of making classical music sustainable and distributing the available resources in an equitable manner. Here lies the crux of the matter. ■

The writer has been associated with classical music in different capacities for the last 45 years. He began in the mid 1960s as



a "wonder stuck and starry eyed concert goer", and two decades later became a student of music. He began to write reviews for leading English and Marathi newspapers in Bombay and other places. In the 1990s, he co-ordinated more than 400 episodes of classical music shows on various TV channels like DD3, Starplus and Zee Music. By the mid-1990s he had metamorphosed into a performing vocalist and has been doing these multiple roles for over 20 years now.

# The *Baul* philosophy

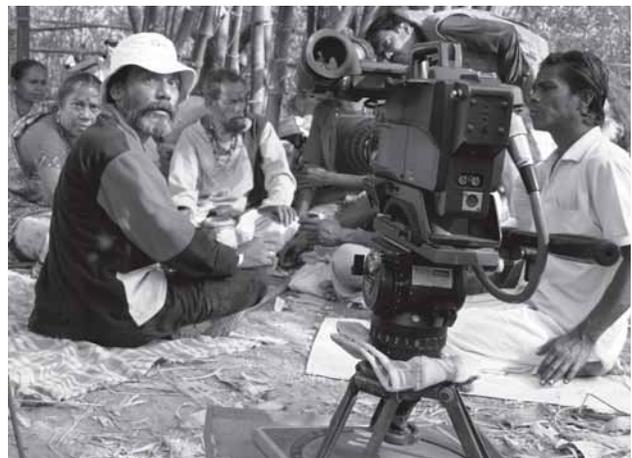
The *Baul* performers of Bengal were more about seeking union with the Divine, than showcasing their musical genius. **Shoma A Chatterji** reviews the movie about Gour Khepa, one of the last *Baul* performers, who died last year. Gour Khepa performed with legends like Bob Dylan, and refused to visit the United States to perform in Peter Brooke's *Mahabharata*, when told he couldn't legally carry hemp with him!

**T**HE *Baul* school of music that originated in Bengal before it was partitioned, is not just music or performance or a 'school', but comprised wandering minstrels who sang their own lyrics set to their own tunes. But to call it a 'school' of music is a misnomer because it is an ideology and a philosophy of life. The *Bauls* dance with bells tied on one ankle, to the rhythm of a small *dugdugi* in one hand and an *ektara* on the other. The *Bauls* are a tradition of religious minstrels in Bengal whose songs of joy, love, and longing for mystical union with the Divine, evoke a profound spirituality. The *Bauls* took elements from devotional Hinduism, Tantric Buddhism, and Sufi Islam, and integrated them into a simple, natural, and direct approach to God, that seeks to transcend established religious boundaries. The *Baul* believes that God resides within us and not out there. His entire life is a search for that God that lives within him.

## All about *Baul* Khepa

Gour Khepa was one of the last genuine *Baul* performers in *Baul* history. Ladly Mukhopadhyay recently screened his 90-minute film *Khyapar Mon Brindabon*, a documentary film on *Baul* Khepa, to a packed audience in Kolkata. 'Dive deep, go to the deep, and then you can become history!' said Gour Khepa who passed away suddenly in a car accident last year. Mukhopadhyay, who was deeply influenced by Gour Khepa, journeyed with the *Baul* for 35 years, and spent eight of those years making the film.

"He was a man of music who belonged to a different kind of reality, a different world altogether. It was not only his music but also his eloquence that revealed the enigmatic charm that mesmerised listeners and made him unique. His words rich with allegories and imageries relate to his philosophy. Gour was a *Baul* maestro who defined the word *Khyapa* in the truest sense of the word, an advocate for 'natural' against 'artificial' and pretentious ways. A first rate performer, bubbling with wit, he loved to attract and surprise people with his performances. He enjoyed baffling people with his



A working still from *Khyapar Mon Brindabon*

comments on social situations and life in general, speaking about true and false, natural and artificial, good and bad, purity and pollution," explains Mukhopadhyay about his subject.

The film begins with Gour singing *Baul howa mukhe rkotha noy*, meaning "To become a *Baul* is no easy job", followed by many more live performances with his close associates. He also talks about his association with Gautam Chattopadhyay and his liking for Bob Marley, Janis Joplin and Bob Dylan. Gabu, who was seen interacting with Mukopadhyay after the screening, said, "The film has rightly captured his essence. People who did not know Gour will get to know him through this film."

Gour Khepa was worldly wise and widely travelled, but this experience did not impact on his music or on his lifestyle. He performed with Bob Dylan, and was invited by Peter Brooke to perform in his *Mahabharat*. He declined the offer when told in no uncertain terms that he would not be legally permitted to carry hemp with him into the United States! In the film, he points out the difference between a genuine *Baul* and a fake one. He emphasises again and again that *Baul* is not just a folk performance but an entire philosophy, a way of life, an ideology all *Bauls* live up to and music is just a part. Candid and caustic, he points out that he liked some of Bob

Dylan's music, but not all. He also worked with Jerzy Grotowski. He had a clear cut take on traditional folk versus Westernised, urban music. He also had close links with the urban elite, litterateurs, singers and men of culture.

The *Bauls* do not believe in the institution of marriage and perhaps, are the initiators of the practice of live-together relationships. The *Baulinis* or the female *Bauls* cook and care for them, travel with them and evolve into ideal life partners outside marriage. The fact that they do not believe in roots, makes them rootless, and they thrive on this rootlessness of their lives. Traditionally, a *Baul* does not believe in progeny; he believes that inner enlightenment comes through a practised sublimated act of love by a couple, the woman partner playing the role of a conscious guide in the cult. Having a daughter himself, how does Gour deal with his personal frustration about reaching the destiny of love traversing the path of desire? He confesses that he has not been fair to his daughter, which is not taken forward in the film. His partner sits beside him and echoes every sentence that he utters.

The film travels to many *Baul* fairs like *Pathorchakuri* in Birbhum, *Tonkaitola mela* in Birbhum, the *Poush mela* in Santiniketan, to Nadia district, which is the central hub of *Baul* culture and *Baul* practice founded by none other than Sri Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Many of these *melas* are now commercialised, while the Jaydev Kenduli *mela* in Birbhum is now dominated by *Keertanias*, a different group of folk performers renowned for their *keertans* – spiritual songs dedicated to different Gods from the Hindu pantheon.

### The authentic *Baul*

Unfortunately, the *Baul* institution of music has been grossly commercialised by modernisation and urbanisation, and the rising demand among Western tourists who are keen on capturing different forms of folk music. *Bauls* therefore, are often exploited as commercial agencies of musical culture in exchange for fame or money. "There are fake *Bauls* and there are authentic *Bauls*," says Gour Khepa in the film, dressed in the typical long, orange *alkhallas* and a dirty patchwork shawl as he constantly draws on his dose of *ganja* or hemp. But



Gour Khepa (on the right)

the never ceasing smile on his face offers an insight into the state of bliss he tries to sustain himself in.

The word *Baul* is derived from *batul*, meaning "afflicted with the wind" or "mad." Thus branded "crazy for God," the *Bauls* go their own way, quarreling with none, wandering free as the wind. Their simple language, passionate rhythm and sensuous dance steps speak directly to one's heart. The origin of *Bauls* is not known to any great degree of accuracy, but the word *Baul* has appeared in Bengali texts as old as the 15th century. The word is found in the *Chaitanya-Bhagavata* of Vrindavanadas as well as in the *Chaitanya Charitamrita* of Krishnadas Kaviraj. All these are descriptive details of the *Bauls*. But it is Lady Mukhopadhyay's *Khyapar Mon Brindaban* that keeps one captivated throughout the film to understand how Gour Khepa lived his ideology and fleshed out the spirit of being a true *Baul*. ■



The writer is a freelance journalist, film scholar and author. She has authored 17 published titles and won the National Award for Best Writing on Cinema, twice. She won the UNFPA-Laadli Media Award, 2010 for 'commitment to addressing and analysing gender issues', among many awards. She is currently Senior Research Fellow, ICSSR, Delhi, researching the politics of presentation of working women in post-colonial Bengali cinema from 1950 to 2003.

### Did you know?

One of the unique aspects of some Hindu temples of India is the musical pillars. The most famous musical pillars are in Sri Vittala Temple in Hampi, Karnataka, built by the Nayak kings of Vijayanagara. Built in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, it has got 56 musical pillars also known as saregama pillars, of which nine are functional and produce melodious tunes. The solid stone columns in these pillars produce audible sound, when struck with a finger. The sound recorded from a pillar is found to produce bell-like sound. Surprisingly, these pillars are rock solid, not hollow as they would look. After in-depth studies, it was concluded that the skill of the stone mason was such that he could discern the sound probability while cutting the stone to desired sizes and shapes. There are musical pillars in Madurai Meenakshi temple, Nellaiappar temple, Tirunelveli, Thanumalayan Temple, Suchindrum and Adhinathar temple, Alwartirunagari all in Tamil Nadu.

# Healing with music

*Music therapy is very much a part of India's ancient traditions and texts, but hardly anyone follows it today. One of the very few, qualified therapists is Pondicherry-based Dr. M. Hariharan, who is trying his best to revive it. But it is an uphill task in India he says, even as the rest of the world has successfully adopted music therapy.*

INDIAN music therapy, otherwise known as *Sangita Chikithsa* (meaning treatment by music), is quite an old and familiar concept in Indian culture. Many references are found in ancient Sanskrit texts and literature, like for instance, in *Raga Nidhi*, *Raga Vibodha*, *Ragamala*, *Ragas*, *Raginis* and *Raga Tattva Nidhi*. Even references to clinical application of music for curative purposes can be seen in Sri Muttuswami Dikshitar's (one of the Musical Trinity of South India) *Navagraha* (nine planetary) compositions for curing various ailments.

However, like many other arts today, India has lost touch with her roots in music therapy too. I have composed and directed 23 CDs and DVDs centered around curing and helping to regulate various ailments including BP (blood pressure), diabetes, cancer counselling, pain, stress, sleeplessness, nervous disorder, memory loss, weight management, heart problems, *chakra* balancing, *chakra* positioning etc. People in India use music as a means to relax after a hectic schedule of work. It is not used for healing or curing, but for releasing the body and the mind temporarily from stress. But I advocate music therapy for permanent healing and cure.

## How does music therapy work?

Music therapy is a programme that uses music to heal ailments. It is a listening therapy programme using specially filtered classical music to improve ear and brain function. A link is established between the sounds we hear and our functioning in speech, learning, energy and stress. Hearing is physical and listening is psychological. Both are vital to our communication skills, establishing good relationships, socialising, and learning intuitiveness. Out of the 12 cranial

nerves, 10 are linked to the ear, indicating the importance of the musical sounds to our nervous system. Studies show that listening to certain kinds of music improves brain function.

We identify and classify patients according to their ailments. Music therapy can cure all kinds of diseases except cancer and diabetes, though this treatment helps extend the life-span of cancer patients. Music therapy is widely used to control

and cure depression, stress, anxiety, BP, migraine, body pain, rheumatism and so on. The therapist administers treatment according to the patient's age, gender, preference to music etc. The duration of the treatment is about 12 weeks. If a patient is on medication, I don't ask them to discontinue. However, gradually, I reduce the amount of intake and increase the music sessions. Thus, it goes in a balanced way. There is also follow-up which is optional. I recommend that the patient be

completely relaxed when he or she undergoes the treatment. We administer soft music for heart patients and high rhythm for low BP patients. I use *santoor* music for working women, for instance, to relax their mind. Similarly, specific instruments and specific *ragas* are used for specific ailments.

The CD's for music therapy for healing and the DVD's for *chakra* positioning are to be heard only in the sleeping mode (i.e. when one retires to bed for sleep), and not during activities like walking, driving, eating and so on. The listening hours have to be spread out for a minimum period of 8-12 weeks, with about 30 minutes of listening to the prescribed music every day.

The classical music that one listens to transforms the improvement of the ear function and also recharges the cortex of the brain. During this period, the client is advised not to leave medical care, and we recommend that the healing



**This is how the combined music therapy module works:**

- **Meditation** helps one's mind, nerves and brain mechanism to concentrate and focus.
- **Chanting** purifies the mind and body.
- **Sacred chants** purify different parts of the body.
- **Planetary mantras** clear the toxins, organic and inorganic substances in the body.
- **Vedic astrology** helps one diagnose the presence of various ailments with the help of the positioning of planetary combination and influences, and for remedial and curative guidance.
- **Music therapy** helps the psychosomatic activities of the mind and body.

process be monitored by the physician or para medical staff. The dosage of medicines, especially for BP, diabetes, cancer, pain, depression, sleeplessness etc., can be slowly reduced to a minimum level as advised by the physician. The best part of this therapy is, it is non-invasive, non-pharmaceutical, and completely safe. There are no negative side effects. Musical healing treats the cause of a listening problem by stimulating and restoring natural ear and brain function. It is also very effective in improving concentration in children.

Today, music therapy is widely practiced and used in many hospitals and clinics in most countries in USA, Canada, Europe, Australia and South East Asian countries. There are more than 70 universities and 300 Colleges in USA and other countries, which have included music therapy in their class room teaching and curriculum, leading to diplomas, under-graduate degrees, graduate degrees and doctoral programmes. The curriculum planning, accreditation, training, job opportunities, research activities, are all managed by the World Music Therapy Congress, with which I am closely associated too.

Ironically, my clients are invariably NRIs (Non-Resident Indians), as music therapy is not very popular among Indians in India. Sad but true! I had opened a clinic in Pondicherry, but had to close down after three months due to lack of response. I have tried to organise an annual Asia Pacific Symposium on Music Education Research in India. However,

one basic qualification for this symposium is that the country must have at least 10 institutions which offer a course in music therapy and as we did not have any, we were disqualified.

It is a matter of frustration that not one institute or university or college has come forward to introduce music therapy in India. People in India do not believe in music therapy as a curative approach. This is the reason that I have founded the *Research Society for Music Education and Music Therapy* based in Pondicherry. The USA had only six universities offering this course in 1985, but today there are 64 universities and more than 300 colleges offering music therapy. In Europe, except in Switzerland and UK, if you want to open a pharmacy, you must have music therapy products also.

I believe in the application of music therapy techniques for early curative healing by combining meditation, *kirtan* chanting, sacred *mantras*, planetary chants, vedic astrology and music therapy. My music therapy modules and techniques are self-devised, practical applications, and I have found my patients benefitting immensely with this. The *mantras*, sacred chants, and planetary *mantras* are to be heard and listened to on a day-to-day basis to cleanse the energy around and purify the body. The *mantras* are from the old textual traditions as prescribed by the great saints and seers of the Indian traditional lore. (See box) Did you know that Indian music is very effective for healing and improving the behaviour pattern of even your pet?

It will be good if more youngsters took to music therapy as a profession. I plan to start a six-month course in music therapy at the Lakeshore Hospital, Kochi in Kerala. This ancient Indian tradition must be revived at all cost. ■

The writer is a well-known music therapist, having trained in the vocal traditions of both Carnatic and Hindustani classical music since the age of seven. He has a Ph.D in ethnomusicology and an Hon. Ph.D from USA on music therapy. He has conducted more than 300 workshops and 200 lectures on the healing powers of Indian music therapy. He has composed and released 24 audio CDs and 3 DVDs on Indian music therapy using traditional Indian musical instruments. Currently, he is the Head of the College of Fine Arts and Performing Arts, and Special Officer for the Culture Department of the Government of Pondicherry, India. He was awarded the *Rajiv Gandhi Excellence Award* for achievements in the field of Music and Musicology. He is also Chairman, *Research Society for Music Education and Music Therapy*, Pondicherry, and *Indian Music Therapy Research Foundation*, Kerala.



**Festival**

*Life as we know it began with light, and is still sustained by it. Everything scientists know about the universe is through the study of light. The Story of Light Festival is being held in Goa from 14-18 January, 2015 to explore and understand this, and will bring together cross-disciplinary scientists, artists, and philosophers. Together, they will translate the magic of quantum physics and our universe into exhibits, workshops, installations, and more. In short, it will explore the intersection of science, philosophy and culture through art and design.*

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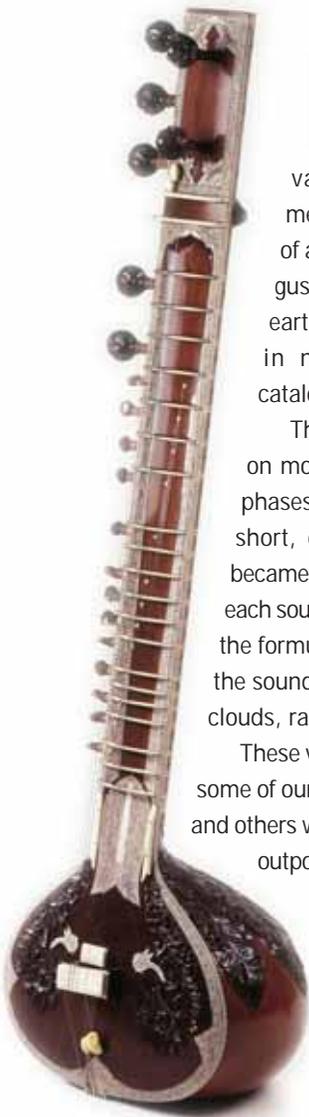
KNOW INDIA BETTER

# Sound of Music



**M**usic has inspired us since time immemorial and led to the creation of various instruments not only to recapture the sounds of nature but also give expression to emotions. We can trace the origin of Indian music instruments in ancient scriptures. Over the years, various regions of the country have been inventing and modifying new instruments.

Text: Kusum Mehta



Sitar

**M**USIC is obviously the first creative expression of man. Man must have picked up

various sounds from nature - the melodious chirping of birds, distant cries of animals, sound of water gently falling, gush of waterfalls, and rain pattering on earth, rocks and trees. In fact, the sounds in nature are too numerous to be catalogued.

The early melodies in India were based on moods of the day, on different seasonal phases, singing of birds, cries of animals, in short, on varied faces of nature, for man became aware of the different vibrations which each sound created. Thus, seems to have begun the formulations of the *ragas*, each expressing the sound of the movement, of light, darkness, clouds, rains, etc.

These varied sweet sounds of nature inspired some of our great poets like Valmiki and Kalidasa and others who have commented on their magical outpourings.

The sweet high pitched note like that of a flute produced by the wind filling the hollows of the reeds and bamboo groves.

Like stars shooting down from the heaven, the cymbals fall.

High pitched on the tall trees, low pitched on the branches, harsh sounding on the rocks and roaring on the waters, the rain falls with measured notes like that of a veena.

The deep noble notes of thunder are echoed in the drums beaten by the drummers.

The flute is sweet like the hum of bees.

When sage Swati listened to the sound of the torrential rain made on the lotus leaves in a lake, he is said to have got the idea to make a drum.

The *Yajur Veda* says that if at the final rites, two musicians were to play on veena and sing, fourfold blessings of *dharmā*, *artha*, *kama* and *moksha* would be secured.

From the Mohen-jodaro and Harappa excavations dating back to 3000 BC, we get an insight into the pre-Vedic period, in which one finds amongst the relics, a fair representation of the important instruments that were in use during that time.

The wide and detailed dissertations on musical instruments in *Natya Shastra* by Bharatha is proof enough of the importance attached to them. In fact, Bharatha, the author, uses a special term *aatodya* for instrumental music.

The instruments were classified by Bharatha into four divisions as follows:

**1. Tata Vadya (stringed instruments):** They are in three varieties:

- a) Bowed-*sarangi*, violin, etc., where sound is produced by drawing a bow across the strings.
- b) Plectral-veena, *sitar*, where strings are plucked by fingers or by a plectrum of wire or horn.

**These two varieties are again classified into two:**

- (i) Those with a plain finger-board like the *sarangi*, *gotuvadyam* etc., which are played on open strings.
- (ii) Those with frets like the veena, *sitar*, and *dilruba*.
- c) Instruments which are struck by a small hammer or pair of sticks like in *gotuvadyam* and *swaramandala*.

**2. (a) Sushura Vadya (wind instruments):** The commonest are those where the wind is supplied by the breath of the performer through the lips, like wilt, conch and musical pipes like the horn. In the latter there are two varieties, those without fingerholes, such as *bluri* and *kombu*. Then there are those with fingerholes like *nagaswaram* and flute. In each of these there are variations again. In some, the wind is blown through vibrating reeds, tongues or mouthpieces as in *nagaswaram*, while in others the wind is blown through an orifice in the wall of the instruments itself as in the flute.

b) In some instruments wind is supplied through the bellows, a simple mechanical contrivance.

**3. Avanaddha Vadya**

(skin covered percussion instruments such as drums):

The skin may be stretched over an open circular frame of wood or metal such as in *kanjira* or over a hollow body enclosing air inside as in *tabla* and *nagaea* or the skin may be stretched over the two faces of a hollow shell open at two ends as in *mridangam* - skin



Dilruba

stretched over a hollow cylindrical body like *gholak* or *uddukkai*.

#### 4. *Gana Vadya* (Solids):

These are instruments made of wood or metal-like sticks (used in *Kolattam*, a musical dance with sticks), *kartal*, wooden castanets, metal gongs.

It is indeed a matter of pride and satisfaction that this decision has proved so basic and sound that two thousand years later western music has made the same four categories soundwise as follows: chorodophonic (strings); membronic (drums); aerophonic (winds); idiophonic (solids). It is of considerable significance that some of these instruments are represented in the Indian pantheon like: Saraswati with the veena, Shiva with the drum, Krishna with the flute and Vishnu with the conch.

In the Vedic period several instruments in all categories grew and expanded for they were used as accompaniments to sman chants. *Veena* as a stringed instrument figures in the *Rig Veda*. The instruments got further enhanced and enriched in the Puranic period, followed by vivid and eloquent treatises on the subject, which give clear evidence of their higher development with sophisticated techniques. The later *samhitas* in Sanskrit and the early Sangam classics in Tamil contain numerous references to many instruments. These treatises talk of hosts of stringed instruments with varying number of strings.

With the advent of the new musical strains and instruments in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the prevailing unitary music system gave way to two new forms of music - Hindusthani and Carnatic, under the impact of Turkish and Persian influences. But this did not undermine the basic foundation of the Indian music, though some new structural developments did result in the instruments. This was when Amir Khusroo introduced some Persian airs with which further sophistication ensued, especially in the Moghul era from 16<sup>th</sup> century onward.

A few of the instruments commonly in use are described here.

**Veena:** It is looked upon as a complete instrument for it is capable of the highest nuances in both melodic as well as harmonic form, and can be played solo and in rhythm simultaneously. It is a mellifluous instrument which creates a soothing effect which induces devotion, and is, therefore, accepted as an aid to meditation. In keeping with these characteristics it is exquisitely designed and beautifully decorated



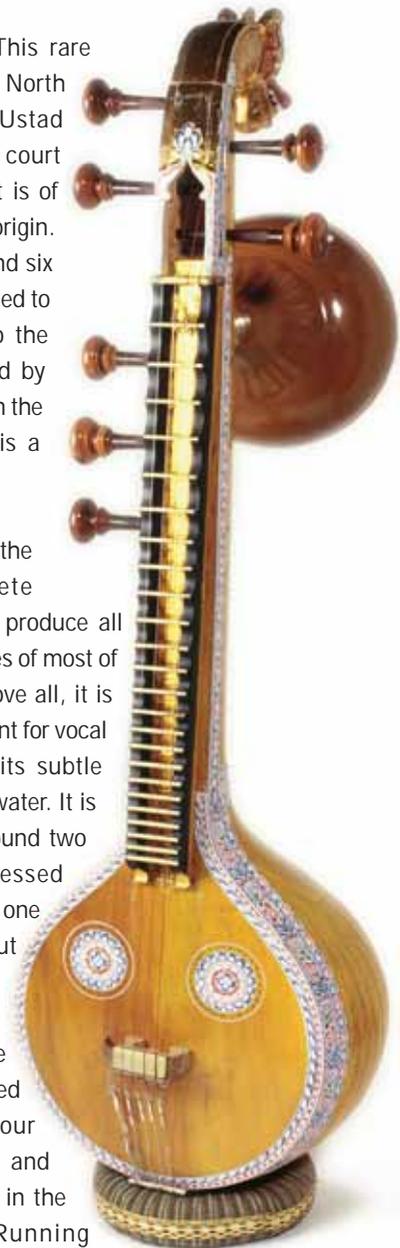
Kanjira

by ornamentation both on the sound box as well as the gourd with ivory or silver designs around the circumference of their bellies and the bars on the finger-board.

**Southern Veena:** This instrument was brought into use by Raghunatha Naik, a ruler of Tanjavur, consisting of 24 fixed frets. The body is hollowed out of a block of wood. The neck is attached to the stem having a wired figure like the head of a dragon. There are seven strings in all.

**Vichitra Veena:** This rare instrument from the North was introduced by Ustad Abdul Aziz Khan, a court musician at Indore. It is of comparatively recent origin. It has a broad stem and six main strings are fastened to wooden pegs fixed to the other end. It is played by means of a plectrum on the right hand finger. It is a stringed instrument.

**Sarangi:** It is like the *veena*, a complete instrument, as it can produce all the effects and nuances of most of the Indian music. Above all, it is ideal as accompaniment for vocal music, because of its subtle pliability like flowing water. It is short in structure, around two feet, with a compressed sound box made from one block of hollowed-out wood, with the belly covered by a leather punchment in the middle of which is fixed the bridge. It has four strings, three of guts and one of brass which is in the lowest pitch. Running



Veena



**Sarangi**

underneath the main strings are the sympathetic ones varying from eleven to fifteen. The sympathetic strings pass through the small holes on the finger-board before reaching the turning pegs. The instrument is played with a short bow. The four turning pegs are fixed at the neck on each side of the hollow head. The small turning pegs fixed in the stem are for the sympathetic strings. The ability to play all types of *ganakas*

gave it prominent place in the Hindustani classical music.

An unusual element in the playing is that the strings are not stopped on the top by the fingertips as is usual in bowed instruments but on their sides by the fingernails on the left hand.

According to the Moghul court records, it was introduced during Akbar's rule and seems to have won the emperor's favour. The tone of the *sarangi* is very near to the human vocal chord. It is one of the most alluring instruments. The bow for playing is held palm upward and the strings are tapped with nails at the sides, not pressed down.

**Sitar:** It consists of a body two feet long made from jackwood or any resonant wood. Sometimes the bowl is just a gourd cut into its core with a belly of three inches wide thin wood fixed upon it which is pierced with sound holes. An ivory wedge connects the body with the finger-board which is three inches in width and slightly concave, carrying 18 to 20 elliptical metal frets on it. Each is held in position by a brass spring connecting its two ends by passing round the stem, which makes the frets easily movable for any sound adjustments.

The instrument is played with a wire plectrum placed upon the forefinger while the thumb presses the edge of the belly. Music is played mostly on the last string, which is stopped by the forefinger and middle finger of the left hand, and this string passes through a small head that helps inaccurate tuning. The other strings are to give the drone. It is the quick style guts that makes the *sitar* such a stirring and exciting vehicle for melody.

The name *sitar* was derived from Persian 'Sehtar' meaning 'three strings' which the instrument originally had.

**Sarod:** It has a short but deep bucket-shaped body which is also the resonator. The lower part of the belly is covered by parchment while the upper finger-board has a plate of burnished steel, but no frets. On this is the bridge over which the strings



**Sarod**



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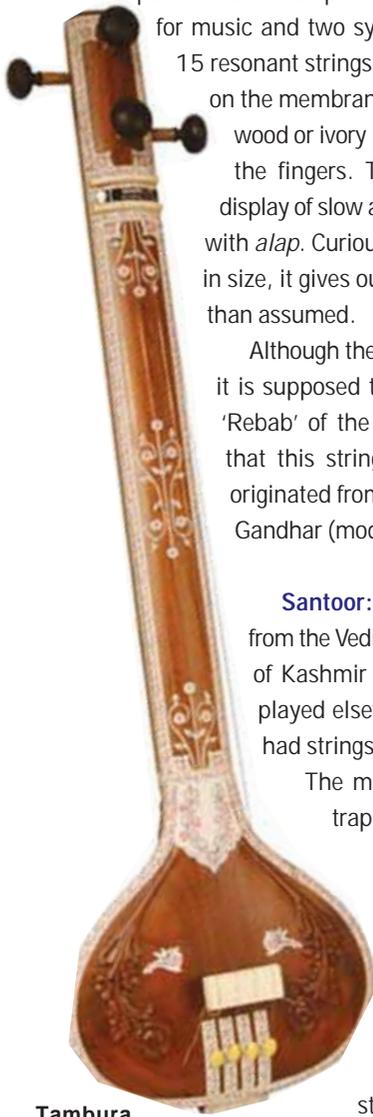
**Santoor**

pass. It has seven principle strings of which five are for music and two sympathetic, and as many as 15 resonant strings. The bridge is thin and rests on the membrane. For playing, a plectrum of wood or ivory is held by the player between the fingers. This has been designed for display of slow and quick guts together, along with *alap*. Curiously enough, though not large in size, it gives out a heavier volume of sound than assumed.

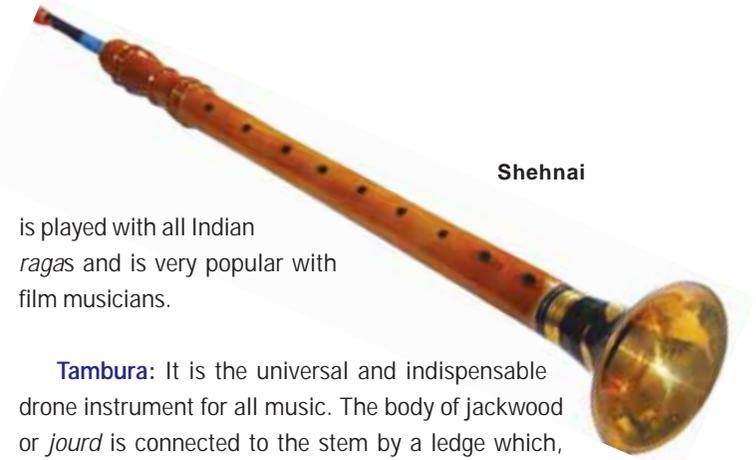
Although the origin of *sarod* is not known, it is supposed to have descended from the 'Rebab' of the Middle East. Some believe that this stringed instrument might have originated from the Greco-Buddhist area of Gandhar (modern Afghanistan).

**Santoor:** *Santoor* which originated from the Vedic *vana veena* is characteristic of Kashmir valley and neither seen nor played elsewhere. The *vana veena* also had strings and was played with sticks.

The modern *santoor* is made of a trapezoid wooden *boz*. There are thirty bridges and a set of four strings of metal, tuned to the same note, which is stretched over each pair of bridges. It is played with a pair of the flat wooden pieces curved at the striking ends. Today, *santoor*



**Tambura**



**Shehnai**

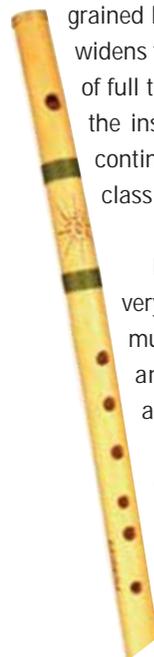
is played with all Indian *ragas* and is very popular with film musicians.

**Tambura:** It is the universal and indispensable drone instrument for all music. The body of jackwood or *jourd* is connected to the stem by a ledge which, where it joins the neck, has four turning pegs fixed on to it, two at right angles to the head, two on the sides. Its four strings are secured to the ledge, and fixed on to the bowl.

*Tambura* is held upright. The four strings are gently pulled continuously, starting with the first string *panchan* and ending with the *mandaran*, using the forefinger of the right hand for this purpose. There are sound tones on its belly.

A simplified version of this is the *ektara* (one string), a common man's drone. It is made of a long bamboo stick around four feet in length and less than two inches in diameter. Its one end is passed through a hollow gourd resonator, while the other end is provided with a tuning peg. One end of the string is fastened to a nail fixed on to the projection of the stick beyond the resonator. From here the string passes over a crude wooden bridge placed on the gourd, and then fastened to the peg at the top. The forefinger plucks the strings for playing.

**Shehnai:** Considered to be an auspicious instrument *shehnai* belongs to the category of aerophonic instruments. It is said to be of Persian origin and is a one-reed instrument with six holes, yielding soft and melodious sound. Made of a smooth dark-grained black wood, the tube is narrower on the top and widens towards the bottom affixed in a cup. All the tunes of full tone, half tone and sharp notes can be played on the instrument through breath control. The notes are continuous and is generally used in classical and high classical music.



**Flute:** This wind instrument of ancient India was very common with Lord Krishna and the religious music of the Buddhists. Even the frescoes of Ajanta and Ellora depict the flute or *bansuri* as an accompaniment to vocal and instrumental music.

Being an instrument of great antiquity, its construction remained constant over the years. It is made of cylindrical bamboo pipe of uniform bore, containing six holes for movement of the fingers and a bigger hole for blowing air. It is handled in an oblique position and air is blown

### Nagaswaram

with the upper lip into the main hole. Different octaves are produced by covering the holes with the fingers.

**Nagaswaram:** It is believed that this representative of the South Indian music evolved from the snake charmers' *pungi*. Nagaswaram was well-known in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries and formed an integral part of the temples. It consists of a wooden mouthpiece into which the player blows the air. This air under pressure is released from the lower end of the gourd through two bamboo or metal pipes. These tubes have a valve each to control air flow through the pipes, and have holes to control the melody. Nagaswaram often attains a wild beauty and softness, and brings out the subtle graces of Carnatic music.

embellishes the peculiarities of Carnatic music.

**Ghatam:** One of the ancient percussion instruments often heard in Carnatic music concerts, it is a mud-pot carefully kneaded and uniformly fired. The mouth of the *ghatam* is open and it is played with two hands, wrists, fingers and nails. The mouth is pressed against the stomach so that when strokes are given, the air inside is set in vibration and gives a deep tone. The player can elicit various volumes and tonal colours by giving the finger strokes at the neck, centre and bottom of outer surface.

### Violin:



### Violin

Though the Indian classical music has a number of stringed instruments of the bowed variety, the introduction of violin to it, is quite recent. In fact, it is the only western instrument to be absorbed completely into Indian music. It is said that about a century ago, Varahappaya, a minister to the Maratha rulers of Tanjavur, explored this instrument to enrich Indian classical music. The strings of the violin in India are tuned in different notes than the Western style. The light tone of the steel string and the deep, almost human tone of the fourth string

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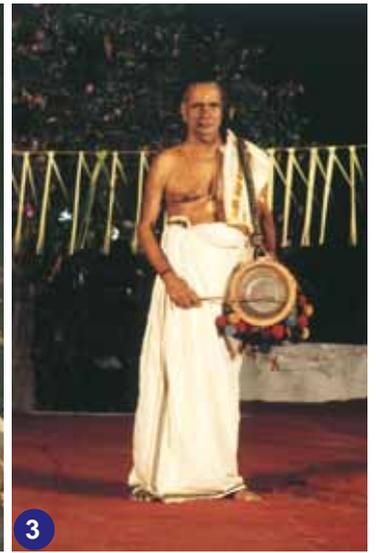
**Tabla:** An evolution of the oldest percussion instrument - *damru* of Shiva - it is believed to be an innovation of Amir Khusrau (a courtier of Allauddin Khilji) in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. It is said to be derived from a kind of Arabian drum called *tabla*. It consists of two drums - *Dayan* (right) or the *tabla* being made



### Ghatam

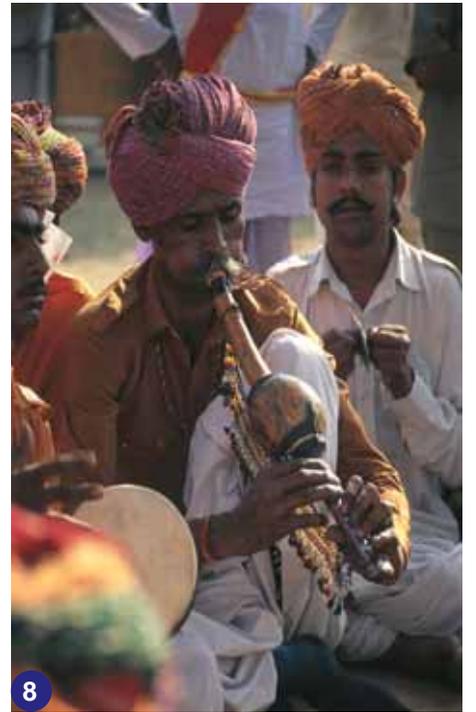
# In tune with the Gods

India is a mosaic of numerous religions and it is little wonder that a vast storehouse of musical instruments from different faiths can be found here. In India, Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism and Jainism are the main religions. Parsis (Zoroastrianism) and Jews (Judaism) are smaller communities, but they too have retained their separate, distinct identities. Music is an integral part of almost all religions. Though Islam and Buddhism are said to have banned music, they do use it by the back door. In case of Islam, music is the soul of its sub-cult Sufism. In case of Buddhism, its sub-cult Mahayana took a liberal attitude towards music and music was taught in Buddhist universities. When music is added to religious rituals it helps to focus the mind engrossed in day-to-day routine chores, on to a higher level. Below is a sample representation of the instruments used by different religions in India.



1. The *Kartaal* is used in devotional singing and dancing by both the Sikhs and Hindus
2. The *Damru* is a favourite instrument played during the *Mahashivaratri puja*

3. The *Edakka* is one of the main instruments in the religious ceremonies of Kerala
4. The Jews blow the *Shofar* (the ram's horn) during prayers
5. The Piano is used for creating melodious hymns in Churches



6. A pilgrim plays the *Ektara* during *Ashadhi Ekadashi* at Pandharpur
7. A *Nagveena* player at Nagraja temple in Kerala
8. A *Been* player, Rajasthan
9. The *Nagada* finds a prominent place in folk and tribal music

10. A village musician of Orissa
11. A Hindu sadhu blowing the *Conch*
12. The *Ghanti* is an integral part of a Hindu temple



**Tabla**

of black wood and the *Bayan* (left) or the *duggi* being made of wood, clay or copper. Both are hollowed from inside and covered with skin fastened to leather straps which are stretched over the body of the drums by means of leather braces. These straps are pulled to raise or lower the pitch. The two pieces of *tabla* are generally tuned one octave apart. In the hands of a master, *tabla* is capable of producing all patterns of rhythms with well-established time cycles (*talas*).

**Kombu or Sringa:** The horn is about four to six feet in length and consists of four or five brass tubes fitting into one another and forms into a crescent shape. The ends can be connected by a cord or rod to give it stability. The horns are in several shapes depending on the region or locality where each has been shaped by usage.

The horn with its strident tone has played a special role. It is used as a sign of welcome and indispensable in all ceremonials, processions, calling attention for announcements, particularly in rural areas.

**Drums:** Down the ages, drums have occupied a key place in human life as the most intimate instrument and, therefore, regarded with sanctity. The *Natya Shastra* describes an elaborate ritual to propitiate the

drum. In it we get not only the wide range of drums but also the names of the deities who preside over each.

The antiquity of our drums is proved by their presence in the Indus Valley. The most ancient and probably the most natural is the *bhumidhundubhi*, the so called Earth-drum. It was contrived by digging a pit in the ground and covering up the surface with stretched skin, then beaten on.

**Mridangam:** It is seen amongst the clay objects of the Indus Valley. In fact, the very word *mri* means earth, so it can be called drum made of clay. Even after wood took over, earth paste continued to be applied to the leather surface until now when powdered manganese came into use and took over. The application of the dark paste is ancient as can be seen in the drums in the Ajanta frescos.



**Mridangam**

**Dholak:** It is a simple and universally popular drum found all over India. It is hollowed out of a solid block of wood. *Nagara* is a very large hemispherical drum. In the olden days it stood at the entrance of a city, a palace or at any important gateway. The battle drum was regarded with great veneration, and valiantly guarded, for the loss of this drum foreboded defeat in battle. *Kanjira* consists of a circular wooden frame 8-10 inches in diameter and 3-4

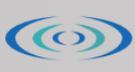
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**Jaltarang**

inches deep. It figures in almost every concert.

Cymbals and castanets are meant for keeping time in music. *Jhalra* is a pair of circular discs of brass or bell-metal to serve as cymbals. *Talam* is a pair of small cymbals, with a very sweet tinkling sound and goes well with soft music. *Cipla* consists of two pieces of hardwood about six inches in length, flat on one side and rounded on the other, provided with slits into which are inserted metal pieces to give out the sound. *Kartal* consists of two circular wooden castanets. The instruments are held in either hand and the faces struck against each other.

**Jaltarang:** It literally means “water waves”. The instrument consists of about eighteen porcelain cups of different sizes,

each possessing a distinctive tone. The cups are arranged in a semi-circle in front of the performer, beginning from the largest to the smallest. The bigger cups produce a deep pitch while the smaller have a higher pitch. The level of water in the cups also help to control the pitch.

**Pakhawaj:** The *pakhawaj* originated in north India and is similar to *mridangam* except for slight differences in construction and playing techniques. The *pakhawaj* is played with an open left hand, whereas southern musicians use the left side similar to the *tabla* players. The use of this instrument is only confined to classical compositions like *dhrupad* and *dhamar*.

**Ravanhattha:** This is an instrument from the violin family



**Pakhawaj**



**Ravanhattha**

## The *Belabaharr* – an exemplary creation



**Pt. Babulal Gandharv, inventor of the *Belabaharr*, with the instrument**

**T**HE invention by Pt. Babulal Gandharv – the *belabaharr*, is a unique instrument that combines the tonal effect of a *sarangi* with the convenience of a violin. *Bela* is the Hindi name for Violin and *baharr* is the world of infinite possibilities, and so this new creation was named *belabaharr*. It was invented in April 1980 in Mumbai.

Pt. Babulal as a youngster was fascinated with the technique and versatility of the violin, though his father Pt. Kashiram Gandharv wasn't happy with the western instrument. Pt. Babulal practiced the violin, but he missed the Indianness in sound which the *sarangi* produced with the sympathetic strings (*tarab*). He had devoted too much time to the violin to start on the *sarangi*, so he thought of adding the *tarab* to the violin.

Soon he encountered the problem of the violin body which was made of ply and was too weak to handle the intense pressure of so many strings. So he decided to work on proper wood and fashioned a violin base and added the extra strings. He used 200-year old teak wood, rosewood, ivory, deer horn and goat skin to make this new instrument.

The final instrument has five main strings and 23 *tarab* strings; of this, 15

are constructed like the *sarod* or *sarangi*, but the remaining eight strings are constructed in a scientific manner under the finger board, which has the five main strings on which the bow is used. Under the bridge there is a special leather belt strip which keeps the balance and bears the heavy tension of all the strings. Except the metal part like the strings, each part was made by Pt. Babulal without the assistance of any artisan or carpenter!

The *belabaharr* was ready in about six months.

The *belabaharr* is not commercially available as a musical instrument, although it is approved by All India Radio and Doordarshan. It has had commercial outings in popular Bollywood hits like *1942 A Love Story*, *Gadar*, *Damini*, *LOC Kargil*, *Refugee* and so on. The *belabaharr* has been a substitute to most varieties of bow instruments like the *dilruba*, *tar-shehnai*, *ravanhatta*, violin, *sarangi* etc. It is a versatile instrument which has also been used in classical, folk, devotional music and contemporary or world music

Today, it is Pt. Babulal Gandharv's son, Naviin Gandharv who is carrying on the tradition of this unique instrument. Naviin, who is proficient at both the *belabaharr* and the *tabla*, has evolved his own distinct style developed from his mentors - legendary *tabla* maestro Ustad Allarakha and his father, Pt. Babulal Gandharv. Born on 20 December 1977 in the heart of Dewas, Madhya Pradesh, Naviin did his initial *tabla* training with his grandfather Pt. Mansingh. Later, he was initiated in the Punjab *gharana* by Ustad Allarakha.

Naviin Gandharv has performed solo with both the *belabaharr* and the *tabla*. ●



**Naviin Gandharv**

– One India One People

and is played by a bow. Its resonator belly consists of coconut shell which has a perpendicular long bamboo with pegs fixed on it. The belly of the instrument has membrane stretched over it like the *sarangi* - but unlike *sarangi* the membrane is not pasted, instead it is tied as on a *tabla* or *dhole*.

*Ravanhattha's* main string is tuned to 'Shahja'. The string is made of a long bunch of horse-tail hair. The bow also consists of the same hair, and consequently, the tonal quality of this instrument sharply differs from metal or gut stringed instruments

as the main playing string.

*Ravanhattha* is mainly played by a ballad-singing community of Rajasthan. The community is known as 'Bhopas of the Bheels'. This instrument can be classed as a ballad instrument. The ballad itself is known as *Pabooji-ki-Padh* i.e. the ballad of Pabooji. The *Ravanhattha* players or the ballad singers utilise an illustrated cloth depicting different incidents from Pabooji's life. It will be interesting to note that this community also utilises two big pitchers stretched with membrane as *Laya-*



**Harmonium**

*Vadya* or percussion rhythm instrument. It is played by two individuals at a time.

Another instrument popular with the *Garasia* tribe of Sirohi (Rajasthan) is known as *chikara* which looks very much like *Ravanhattha*, though, actually it differs from *Ravanhattha*. The difference lies in setting of and in method of playing on the main strings. *Chikara*'s main string is pressed on the body of the bamboo whereas *Ravanhattha*'s main playing string remains aloof from the main body as an angular position.

*Jantar* belongs to the harp family of musical instruments. The strings of the instrument are struck by fingers and notes are manipulated on frets.

*Jantar* has a look of an old *veena*. It has two *jourds* joined with a long bamboo. Fourteen frets are pasted on the body of the instrument with four pegs for the strings.

The peculiarity of *jantar* is established by two main features –one of them is the vertical shape of the *meru* and *ghori* (bridge) at the *gag* end of the instrument, and the other, the



**Jhanj Manjira**

way strings are struck. No other instrument in India of this type has been referred to in recent years.

*Kamayacha* resembles and may also fulfill the purpose of a *sarangi* but in its shape, size and strong organisation, it differs from the *sarangi*. Like other instruments *kamayacha* is also played by a community known as *Manganiyars* of Jaisalmer.

*Satara* is an aerophonic double flute instrument. It consists of two flutes and both of them are blown simultaneously. One of the flute is utilised only to serve as drone and other is played to produce the melody. There is another instrument known as *algoja* also with two strings. But *algoja* differs from *satara*.

There are several centres in India where musical instruments are made. It must, however, be pointed out that each centre specialises only in certain instruments, as it would be physically impossible for one place to attempt more than just a few. ■

(This article has been reproduced from the *Know India Better* anthology, brought out by the *One India One People Foundation* in 2006)

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## New OIOP Clubs in Mumbai

### Sheth V. K. Natha High School (Gujarati Medium), Dahisar



Mrs. Sucharita R. Hegde, OIOP Foundation Trustee and Managing Editor, presenting the OIOP Club membership certificate to the Principal Mrs. Asha R. Joshi



Principal Mrs. Joshi, Anuradha Dhaireswar, Editor, OIOP, and Mrs. Hegde addressing the students



Students sing a song on the occasion

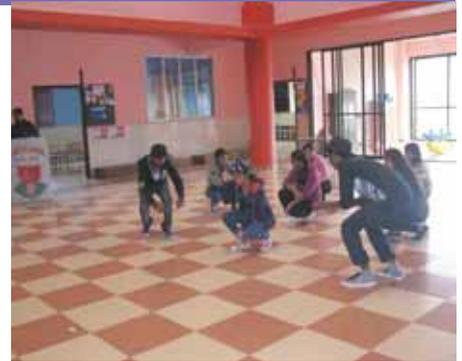
### St. Rock's High School & Jr. College, Gorai -II, Borivali



Co-ordinator, Ms. Vaishali Bansode delivers the welcome speech



Mrs. Hegde presenting the OIOP Club membership certificate to the Principal Mrs. Meenakshi Bhargav



Students present a dance

### Gandhi Shikshan Bhavan Smt. Surajba College of Education (B.Ed), Juhu Road



Anuradha Dhaireswar, Mrs. Hegde and Principal Dr. Ratnaprabha Rajmane at the inaugural event



Mrs. Hegde addressing the students



A section of the audience

## New OIOP Clubs in Mumbai

### Rakesh Jain Madhyamik Vidyamandir School, Shivkar Village, Panvel



Mrs. Sucharita R. Hegde, Trustee and Managing Editor, presented the OIOP Club membership certificate to the Principal Mr. Suresh Kanu Dhavle, and Chairman, SKS Chakshu Foundation, Mr. Nirbhay Jain



Mrs. Hegde addressed the students. Also seen is Mrs. Soumyalatha Shetty, Trustee, OIOP Foundation



Students present a dance on the occasion

### Pioneer English School and Jr. College, Bhau Daji Road, Matunga



Principal Mrs. Sumathi Shetty lighting a lamp at the inauguration of the OIOP Clubs. Mrs. Hegde and Co-ordinator Mr. Kanchan Manoj Gupta look on



Mrs. Hegde fielding question from the students



Mrs. Hegde interacting with the students

### Nalanda Nritya Kala Mahavidyalaya, Vile Parle (West)



Mrs. Hegde presenting the OIOP Club membership certificate to the Principal Dr. Uma Rele



Students perform on the occasion.



A section of the audience

## “My passion is to demystify classical music for the lay listener..”

**Dhanashree Pandit Rai** is one of the leading exponents of the thumri genre of music and her popularity owes itself to her rare voice quality that emulates the myriad emotions of *thumri* – languor, delicacy, sensuousness and “pukar”.

She has trained in *khayal* under the stalwart of the Kirana *gharana* Pt. Firoz Dastur and further specialised in *thumri* under the guidance of the *thumri* legend Shobha Gurtu. She has a Masters degree in music from the Bombay University. Dhanashree Pandit aspires to give *thumri* its rightful place on the concert stage since it faces the risk of extinction with the dominance of *khayal*.



She has performed in all the leading music institutions in Mumbai and all over India, and has toured the U.S. several times for concerts and music workshops. She has been conducting lecture demonstrations and workshops on ‘Appreciation of Hindustani music’ and her talk at the TEDx conference in 2010 on ‘The essence of Indian music’, was widely acclaimed. She is a visiting lecturer on *thumri* at the SNDT University, Mumbai.

She has also been teaching Indian vocal techniques to renowned jazz musicians from all over the world and has recorded fusion albums with many of them. She has released several *thumri* albums including Saawan ki thumri, Barsat Rang and Kanha Re, under the banner of Times Music and Dreams Entertainment and her latest release is a world music album ‘Always Here’ released by Amoka Records.

In a free-wheeling conversation with **E. Vijayalakshmi Rajan**, a very gung-ho Dhanashree Pandit Rai explains why she is optimistic about the younger generation taking forward the legacy of Hindustani classical music, and why it is so important to move with the times.

**How safe is the position of Indian classical music in today’s times?**

It has become a stereotypical habit hasn’t it, to say that Indian classical music is dying out, and to lament the ‘good old days’ of classical music? But I feel just the opposite. There seem to be more and more youngsters pursuing music

today and doing it to a good degree of mastery; and in fact, they seem to be doing it faster than in our times. It is almost as if the “crop” has changed. Children born in today’s age are quicker on the uptake and are reaching good standards of performance in a relatively shorter time. I look at the number of proficient young singers and instrumentalists

these days and feel extremely optimistic about the future of classical music. It is in safe and good hands for sure.

Having said this I do have one observation...the youth want instant recognition. They want to know if there is going to be a tangible benefit for the time and money they are putting in to learn this art. This is where the answer becomes difficult. I tell them I can guarantee that they will become proficient musicians if they put in enough time and practise, but how can I promise them fame and recognition?

When we studied music, we instinctively prescribed to the *Bhagvad Gita* principle of 'putting in honest and continued efforts, and not concentrating on the goal'. We didn't get into music with any plan to make it into a career and I can say that with certainty for me and my contemporaries.

A kind of philosophy most music *gurus* followed in our days was to curb the praise lest the student start getting indolent or egoistic. The idea was to make us realise that classical music is a huge ocean and at no point should you start to feel that you know it all. Having said that, sometimes the "not praising enough" can lead to confidence problems so maybe it's a good idea for today's *gurus*, to give their talented students, along with the discipline of hard practice, that extra pat on the back and tell them they are on the right path and that they can do it !

### **Why do you think the current generation is interested in learning classical music?**

As the wheel of life and time turns, the tendency to return to one's roots is but natural. For the urban westernised youth, something has clicked in the brain that is telling them...there is a great wealth of art that belongs to your country and that you are missing out on! The stresses in their life is making them look for a music that can help them look inward and provide mental peace and stability. Just look around you and observe how the youngsters have their ipods glued onto them almost the whole day...if only those ipods had some classical music playing too!

I have seen that in some households where the parents have been playing Indian classical music regularly, their children have subconsciously developed a great taste and love for the music without even realising it!

Also, some city colleges and schools are now offering appreciation

courses on Indian music from time to time and this is a very positive practice. The youth are coming to realise that it is not just adopting Western values and culture that makes you "cool"! More significantly, young Indian musicians who are singing western rock and jazz are contacting me for some basic training in Indian vocals and *ragas*. They cannot survive by just interpreting and performing songs already recorded and sung by Western pop and rock groups. In search of some innovation or a distinct style that does not just ape or copy the West...they have to incorporate some elements from their own Indian culture!

### **Is the *guru-shishya parampara* the same as it was earlier?**

Although the *guru-shishya parampara* of "one to one" music training still continues, *gurus* today allow youngsters to record the lessons. In our times this practice was banned so we had to be totally focussed during the lesson. The only way to record was in your brain, with the use of notation (*sargam*). So we developed the ability to notate really fast. That ability seems to be lost today as also the ability to concentrate (since the student knows that the entire lesson is recorded with him). However, despite this, I am all for change. The younger generation wants things fast only because they are dealing with greater responsibilities and stresses than in our times, so they have to flow with the change and so do their *gurus*.

### **How realistic is it to pursue a career in music these days?**

A career in music is dependent on many variables, like in all the fine arts, so I always advise my young students to aspire for a full fledged music profession but to also develop a parallel career in the subject of their professional educational degree.

You must have a fall back option if the career in music does not work out as expected. It is not impossible to have an office job and devote 2 to 3 hours to music daily. I think that would be a safe balance to pursue a non music career and side by side keep the music practice going...and when the time is ready and the music assignments pick up, you can revert to it full time!

Some of the options I see available for qualified musicians today would be that of a full time performer, teaching and research scholar, working at music



institutes, and then of course, many aspire to get an entry into Bollywood. Easier said than done!

### **Can you briefly talk about your role in educating the lay listener in Indian music?**

Besides classical and *thumri* performances, my passion is to demystify classical music for the lay listener through interactive workshops and lecture demonstrations.

In my workshops, in order to get the immediate attention of the young listeners, I use current Bollywood songs to help teach them ear training and *raag* recognition. For instance, who would believe that a song like *Munni bandnaam hui* is roughly based on *raag madmad sarang*, and songs like *Ram chaaha leela chahe*, *dhoom macha le* and *lungi dance*, all have clips of *raag bhairavi*. This immediately draws the attention of the youth and they are able to absorb the more complex concepts very easily. One of the most popular *raag* used in Bollywood music these days is *raag darbari*. Songs like *badtameez dil*, *mora piya mose bolat nahi*, *balam pichkari*, *sun raha hai na tu* are all roughly based on this *raag*. When I do workshops for senior citizens I use film songs from the 1950s and 1960s.

The idea is to get rid of this mental block that "Indian Music is only for the seasoned listener and that the lay listener will never be able to understand its nuances".

At present I do have a few advanced students of music learning *thumri* from me. I do not take on too many since I have to keep my voice well rested for my own *riyaaz*.

### **Can you tell us about your training programme and collaboration with jazz musicians?**

As a music educator I have also been guiding jazz singers from all around the world in Indian vocal techniques. This collaboration was initiated by the late Mr. Niranjan Jhaveri who invited me to set up formal voice training programme for Jazz vocalists. This program was called JIVI (Jazz India vocal Institute). Being a true Jazz buff himself, he felt that Jazz singers didn't have a formal voice training programme and since they use the natural speaking voice for singing like the Hindustani classical artistes, they would benefit much by learning Indian music. After he passed away, JIVI does not exist anymore, although I do continue to guide jazz vocalists from all over the world.

Some of the aspects I train them in are *riyaaz* (practice routines) and vocal warm ups, *harkats* or Indian music ornamentations like the *murki*, *meend*, *gamak* and of course *raag* music. Since jazz is a music that is all about improvisation and enriching itself by the use of sounds of the world, there is

a great scope for collaborating with Indian music forms. The concept of our *raga* music – a scale of notes that creates an aesthetic mood, is attracting Western musicians since their music moves in a limited number of scales.

### **Can you speak a bit about the new emerging fusion music?**

These days a new shelf has appeared in the music stores: "World Music / Fusion Music/ Crossover Music", and I for one am truly glad this is happening. It is a sign of music breaking barriers, defying set labels and all genres freely mixing and merging with each other (of course when done within aesthetic parameters!) There will always be good examples and bad examples of such music, but it represents to me a friendly handshake across the world.

Since pure "Classical Music" be it Indian or Western, will always remain a bit inflexible and will have rules and boundaries (by virtue of being a classical art), the mixing and merging can happen in a freer genre of music...like jazz or pop, and more significantly for us, in Bollywood music.

You will be surprised to know that in our Indian music studios these days, the notations used are all Western...they speak of pitches in terms like A minor and G flat etc...and the recording engineers as well as the seasoned Indian musicians are reading and using Western scores and notation and using chords and harmonies peculiar to Western music!

On the other side, Western music bands are beginning to enjoy incorporating Indian instruments like the *tabla*, *sitar* etc., to add an Indian flavour to the music. Some of the Indian artistes who have set this trend are Shubha Mudgal (eminent vocalist) Ravi Chari (*sitar*), Rahul Sharma (*santoor*) among others. In my own way, I have collaborated extensively with eminent jazz pianist Richard Bennett from New York (we have an album waiting to be released early next year), and I have recently released an album produced by Storms (bassist Sanjay Swami) called *Always Here* which uses *thumri* in a jazz setting.

Most Indian classical vocalists however are still a bit hesitant to venture into Indo-Western crossover experiments and prefer to remain pure to the classical form.

I would like to quote the British Historian Arnold Toynbee: "The vast literature, the magnificent opulence, the majestic sciences, the soul touching music, the awe inspiring gods...It is already becoming clearer that a chapter which has a Western beginning will have to have an Indian ending if it is not to end in the destruction of the human race. At this supremely dangerous moment in history, the only way of salvation for mankind is the Indian way." ■

“Begum Akhtar remains the queen of *ghazals*. Not many people know that even the king of *ghazals*, Mehdi Hassan, used to look up to her and often called up to pay his respects from Pakistan”.

Rita Ganguly, a *Padmashree* awardee and recipient of the *Sangeet Natak Akademi* award, has established and popularised her *guru* Begum Akhtar’s legacy for 40 years. She has also founded the *Begum Akhtar Academy of Ghazals* and is currently preparing for a series of programmes and recitals across the country. In October last year, Ganguly released her book, *Ae Mohabbat – reminiscing Begum Akhtar*.



In an emotionally rich interview, this veteran vocalist opens her box of memories of interactions with her mentor, her own entry into music, and her total commitment to music. Few know that Rita Ganguly is a multi-talented person who has command over dance, drama and writing, in addition to music. **Shoma A Chatterji** goes on a melodic, reminiscing journey with **Rita Ganguly**.

**Let us hear a little about your background.**

My father, K.L. Ganguly, was a freedom fighter. He was among those who founded the newspaper *National Herald*. My mother Meena was a homemaker. I grew up in Lucknow in an ambience soaked in music and dance. When I was four years old, my parents had organised a cultural programme where Sarojini Naidu was the chief guest. I performed an impromptu dance. She was so impressed by my performance that she insisted I accompany her to perform at every cultural event she went to. I went to Viswa Bharati University in Santiniketan when I was 12 to learn history, music and dance. So I began as a dancer and music came later on.

**But unlike your older sister the late Gita Ghatak, a doyen in *Rabindra Sangeet*, you chose to perform outside Bengal. Why?** Viswa Bharati took me closer to Bengal, and it was necessary

because by birth, I am a Bengali. I have sung my bit of Tagore songs and liked it. But as my upbringing had been in Lucknow, I considered myself more Indian than Bengali. Bengali music was never an option. I believed even at that young age, that confining myself to Tagore’s music and songs, I would have restricted my reach within Bengal, whereas my dream was to spread my music across the country, at the national level.

**What styles of dance did you learn at Viswa Bharati?**

I studied *Kathakali* and *Manipuri* at Santiniketan and later trained under *Kathakali* legends Kunju Kurup and Chandu Pannikar. I became a danseuse and learnt modern dance from Martha Graham in the United States, going on to perform *Kathakali* at the Bolshoi theatre in the former Soviet Union. My training in dance caught up with me many years later when I was already an established vocalist. I introduced the

first course in India at the National School of Drama (NSD) in Delhi called 'Movement and Mime', and taught the course for three decades and also brought about a revival of classical theatre at the NSD.

**How did music catch on and become integral to your life?**

Music strayed into my life like an accident of fate. In the 50s, I was giving dance performances everywhere. I was performing *Kathakali* at a dance show in Delhi. During the performance, the accompanying vocalist forgot some lines of the song so I began to fill in. After the performance, the great *Kathak* exponent Pandit Shambhu Maharaj *ji* came backstage to compliment me on my voice and persuaded me to learn music from him as he too, was a trained vocalist. This changed my life forever.

**You studied music later under Siddheshwari Devi. How did this happen?**

Once, during my music lessons under the tutelage of Pandit Shambhu Maharaj, Siddheshwari Devi heard me singing. She loved my voice and offered me a national scholarship to study classical music. I travelled right across the country with her, imbibing as much of music as I could during my sojourns at different concerts and conferences.

**How did you become a disciple of Begum Akhtar?**

This is yet another story that fate decided for me. Once, when I was at a concert with Siddheshwari Devi in Lucknow, *Ammi* (Begum Akhtar) heard me singing. She wanted me as a student. But to become her student, I needed the permission of Siddheshwari Devi who was not at all on good terms with Begum Akhtar at the time. *Ammi* wanted me so badly that she visited Siddheshwari Devi at her Delhi residence around eleven in the night. "Look who has come to your door after 30 long years" said *Ammi* to Siddheshwari Devi. My *ganda-bandhan* ceremony happened that night itself. Once more, my life took a different turn.

**You have trained in music under different *gurus*. How did their teaching styles differ?**

Personalities are distinct from one another. I have learnt different things from different *gurus* – Shambhu Maharaj, classical *dhrupad* from Gopeshwar Bandopadhyay, *thumri* from Siddheshwari Devi and so on. I have learnt something from each one of them. Having said that, I insist that *Ammi* will always be more relevant than the rest. For me, she is unique. This is not to belittle the other *gurus*, but this is because I spent the longest time with her, not only as her

disciple, but she was in many ways, my friend, philosopher and guide. Begum Akhtar remains the queen of *ghazals*. Not many people know that even the king of *ghazals*, Mehdi Hassan, used to look up to her and often called up to pay his respects from Pakistan. I have tried to carry *Ammi's* legacy forward for 40 years and got solid support from everywhere.

**It must have been difficult for you to come out of the tragedy of losing her?**

Her influence on me was so deep that it took me eight long years to come out of her aura and come to terms with my own music. She taught me not just music, but also how to compose music, how to perform a single *bandish* in three different ways. *Ammi* insisted that her disciples should create their own styles instead of imitating her. She taught us to create and define our styles not only through *riyaz* and training, but also through extensive and intensive research. For example, if I was to render a *ghazal* around the concept of *ishq* meaning love, *Ammi* would expect us to read at least 20 different poets and *shayars* who have written on *ishq* to get at the core of how to express the emotion while rendering a *nazm* or a *thumri* or a *ghazal* on this subject. This means that one had to learn to read, write and understand Urdu. Ninety per cent of what I learnt was on stage. I would sit behind her while she sang. Then, during one performance, she told me not to sit behind her but beside her, because I needed to be confident enough to hold the stage not behind her, but beside her!

**You are the key to her centenary celebrations in 2014. Are you happy?**

I am thrilled. One is the programme I initiated and organised at The Nehru Centre in London held in November. In October, the book *Ae Mohabbat – reminiscing Begum Akhtar*, co-authored by me and Jyoti Sabharwal, the publisher, was released. The book is a wonderfully brought out tome filled with photographic reproductions of the Begum in her many *avatars* through her life. A road in Kolkata is being named Begum Akhtar Sarani. In Lucknow, the street she lived on will be named Begum Akhtar Marg. An unnamed road in Faizabad, where she was born will be named after her. The house she was born in will become a museum. It is adjacent to a garden created by Nawab Asaf-ud-Daula, which houses the mausoleum of his wife, which could become a good tourist attraction. If it could also become the home ground of an annual festival in honour of *Ammi*, then it would be an excellent source of revenue, foreign exchange and popularity, not to forget initiating visitors to this world of music. ■

# A war of ice and fire

*In a heartfelt salute to the Indian Army, Brig. Suresh Chandra Sharma describes the Siachen Glacier, where Indian soldiers are engaged in a daily battle for survival as much with the Pakistanis, as with the harsh, unrelenting weather conditions. It is the patriotism and bravery of these soldiers, which has helped India maintain its supremacy in Siachen, he says.*

**T**HE Siachen Glacier, which is 70 kms long and 1 to 2.5 kms wide, is the second largest glacier in the world and is situated between the Saltoro Ridge and Karakoram Range. It is part of the watershed between Central Asia and India. The height varies from 11875 to 18875 ft. Bone chilling winds whip the landscape and avalanches sweep soldiers into crevices. There are three major passes running from North to South- Sia La at 18330 ft, Bilafond La at 17880 ft and Gyong La at 18665 ft. In 1949, the Cease Fire Line was defined up to Point NJ 9842. India wants it to run North West along the Salto Range, while Pakistan wants it to run North East towards Karakoram Range. Pakistan started showing Siachen as its territory in their maps and gave permission to foreign teams to explore the mountains around. Colonel Kumar, a veteran of two expeditions to the Everest, took permission to explore Siachen. Stobdan, a Ladakhi officer, led his team via Khardungla Pass and Nubra Valley and spent three months in Siachen.

## Colonel Kumar's expedition

An expedition of about 50 men under Colonel Kumar set out in June 1978. Often the mist thickened, making it difficult to distinguish snow from the sky. They climbed the 24631 feet high Sia Kangri peak and looked across to China. They returned after three and a half months and the Indian Army continued to send expeditions to Siachen every year. In 1981, Kumar traversed the entire glacier and hoisted the tricolour at the farthest end and skied to Bilafond La, Sia La and Turkistan La. In a tribute

to his reconnaissance that provided vital information to the army, the battalion headquarters located on the Siachen Glacier is named Kumar Base.

Pakistan got alarmed and sent patrols to Siachen in July 1982. Protest notes were exchanged. Lt. General Jahan Dad Khan of Pakistan Army has narrated in his book that about 80 soldiers from Special Services Group (SSG) of Pakistan had established presence on Bilafond La in August 1983, but were ordered to pull out after ten days owing to bad weather. The race started between the two armies to occupy the passes. Pakistan planned to launch the operation in May 1984, considering the weather conditions. Indian Army pre-empted it by defying the weather and moved troops there in April 1984. Operation Meghdoot, planned by Lt. General P. N. Hoon was launched on 13 April 1984.

## Occupying Siachen

At 6 a.m., on 13 April, Captain (later Lt. General) Sanjay Kulkarni and another army soldier jumped on to the heavily snow covered Bilafond La from a hovering Cheetah helicopter piloted by the Indian Air Force (IAF). Seventeen sorties of helicopters heli-dropped the remaining 27 soldiers. Within a few hours of their landing, the radio operator, Lance Naik Ramesh Singh, had to be evacuated, as he had developed high altitude pulmonary oedema. A blizzard cut off communications for three days, after which a helicopter flew there and confirmed successful occupation of the pass. After establishment of radio communications, Kulkarni passed

information about Lance Naik Ramesh Singh's casualty which was intercepted by the Pakistan Army and it learnt about the presence of the Indians in Siachen. The Pakistan Air Force immediately launched helicopters and even fighter aircraft on reconnaissance missions. The Indian Army responded swiftly by deploying man-portable shoulder-fired low-altitude surface-to-air missile systems. Ramesh Singh died four days later and became the first casualty of this war. A platoon of the Ladakh Scouts under Major Ajay Bahuguna was heli-lifted to Sia La on 17 April. The soldiers were dropped within 5 km east of the pass, from where they had to trek up a treacherous terrain to Sia La. There was no exchange of fire initially, and the area looked like the highest playground. The ski troopers had the best of time. Indian soldiers rightly considered themselves to be heroes, having faced severe terrain conditions and outwitted the Pakistanis. There was a terrific sense of bonding. They sang and danced in short steps, typical of the hill people.

The Pakistani Army had an apprehension that the Indian Army may ingress into Baltistan. They pushed up a large number of soldiers and India responded by increasing their own strength. In the third week of June, Pakistan attacked Bilafond La and were repulsed. There were more casualties due to weather than enemy fire on both sides. Some of the politicians in Pakistan taunted the army for having let the Indians take control of Siachen. They could not think of withdrawal. Nor could India.

In April 1987, the Pakistani Army had occupied a peak overlooking

Bilafond La and was interfering with movement of troops and supplies. It was named Quaid Post by Pakistan. On 19 April, one JCO (Jt. Commanding Officer) and five soldiers were killed. This had to be dealt with. A patrol under Lt. Pande and nine men scaled a 1500 feet ice wall to find out the strength and disposition of the enemy. They came under fire and nine of them including Pande were killed. Naib Subedar (later Hon. Captain) Bana Singh volunteered to capture the post. The commanding officer told him not to come back without success. In a daring raid Bana Singh captured the post and was awarded PVC. It has been renamed Bana Post. Pakistan had no hopes of recapturing Bana Post and yet wanted to act "to restore its morale and punish the Indians", as per Lt. General Imran Ullah Khan, GOC 10 Corps of Pakistan. It attacked Rana and Akbar posts opposite Bilafond La on 18 September. The attack was repulsed and the bodies of Pakistani soldiers lay in the snow for about nine months till allowed to be taken away by

the Indians next spring. It was the first time after 1984 that Pakistan dared to go on the offensive. Lt. General Khan tried to cover his failure by calling this defeat more powerful than victory. Over a period of time, the Indian Army went on to gain control of most of the heights on the Saltro Range, west of the Siachen Glacier, and the Pakistani Army is holding posts at lower elevations of the western slopes of Saltro ridgeline. Indian Army has the tactical advantage.

### High altitude doctrine

Over the past three decades, the Indian Army, ably supported by the Indian Air Force, has mastered the treacherous mountains and has evolved a high altitude doctrine that is the envy of the world. In the process, the Indian military has shed blood, made enormous sacrifices and braved the elements. The Indian soldier does not show fear. Every soldier selected for Siachen tenure expresses pride. A Reuter correspondent who extensively toured Siachen area observed that the Indian Army was

known to tolerate a far higher level of risk than the western armies. Sepoy Vikram Singh told her that the fear of life and death goes away on joining the army. The new inductees to Siachen are put through a rigorous training programme. They learn ice craft, skills of traversing through soft snow, and go through high altitude treks. About one percent fail and are sent back. In any other army, the percentage would be much higher. Their resilience propels them to carry out death defying acts.

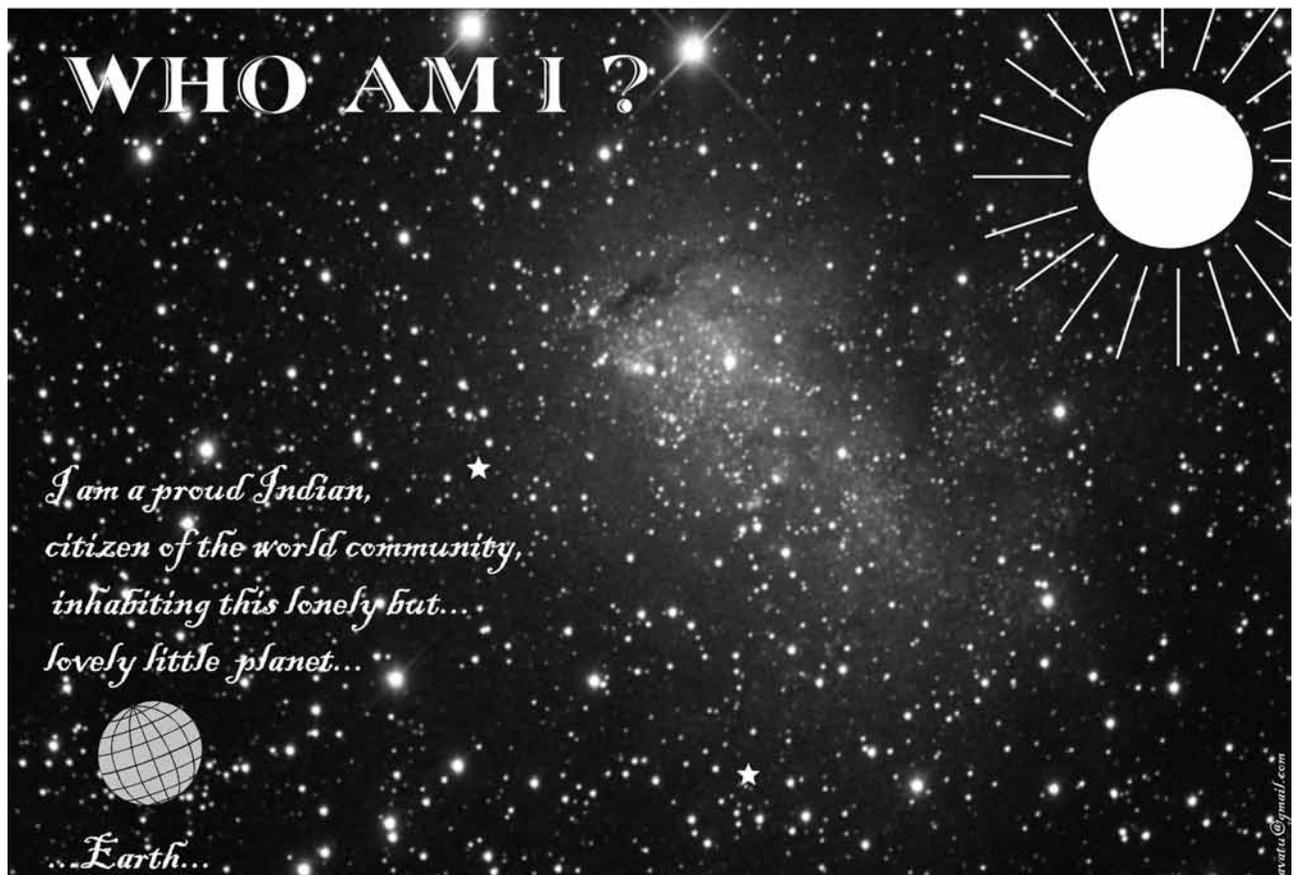
*Here great courage and fortitude is the norm.*

-Sign at Siachen base

**Brigadier Suresh Chandra Sharma (retd.) served in the Army for 30 years. Post retirement**



**he served the telecom industry with multinational and Indian corporates. He is also a freelance journalist and has interests in national security issues.**



# An annual reunion

*The Renukaji Fair held annually in Himachal Pradesh is built around a hoary, interesting legend. The fair attracts large crowds and gives tourism in the region a tremendous boost. It is a win-win situation all round, says Tirtho Banerjee after attending the fair.*

**T**RUMPETS sounded and beats of drums reverberated as chants of *Jai Parshuram* and *Jai Renukaji* rent the air. Carrying colourful silver palanquins of deities, people drenched in devotion danced with religious fervour and joined in the *shobha yatra* (procession). The palanquin of Lord Parshuram was brought to Renukaji from the ancient temple of Jami Koti village, the permanent abode of the Lord via Dadahu in Himachal Pradesh. It was a long one-and-a-half-hour journey, but never a tedious one. The palanquins were placed in the temple for visitors to pay obeisance. After taking a holy dip in the Renukaji Lake and bathing the palanquin idols in the sacred lake, the saints offered their prayers to the Gods. And the celebration started with pomp and show.

It was the annual five-day long Renukaji Fair, held from November 2-6, 2014, when people from around the

world congregated to mark the divine meeting of Parshuram, the sixth incarnation of Lord Vishnu, with his mother Renuka. The banks of the lake wore a festive look as shops of local handicrafts, food kiosks and art exhibits dotted the path. Exuberance was writ large on the faces of the people who watched the cultural programmes, folk dances and religious functions that are the highlights of the occasion. "The fair not just entertains, but also offers a glimpse into the rich heritage of India", said a tourist Gagan Pandey, who was visiting the place for the first time.



**The Renukaji Lake**

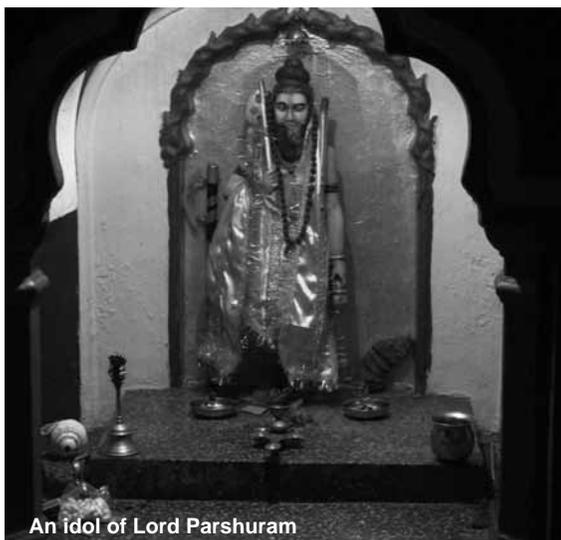
Shiva, who gave him a divine weapon *Parshu* as a gift. And from then on, people started calling him Parshuram.

King Sahastrabahu was killing saints and sages while disrupting their *yagnas*. He heard of Yamdagni's affluence and came visiting at their house. Like good hosts, Yamdagni and Renukaji served Sahastrabahu and his army with numerous dishes. The king was stunned at the enormity of the food and asked the *rishi* about his resources. Yamdagni told him about the *Kamdhenu* cow, which was given to him by Lord Vishnu. Sahastrabahu asked Yamdagni to hand over the cow to him, but the *rishi* declined. Sahastrabahu flew into a rage and killed Yamdagni and his four sons mercilessly. Not stopping at this, he also tried to kidnap Renukaji, who plunged herself into the nearby Ram Sarovar. This is today called the Renukaji Lake, which looks like a woman reclining on her side.

When Parshuram, who was

## The legend

Legends abound around the fair. The most popular one goes like this: *Maharishi Yamdagni* and his wife Bhagwati Renukaji meditated on the *Tape Ka Tila*, a hillock, for many years together. Pleased with their prayers, Lord Shiva blessed the couple with five sons - one among them was Parshuram. His parents named him Ram. Ram was a devotee of Lord Shiva. His ardent devotion impressed Lord



**An idol of Lord Parshuram**



**The Renukaji temple**

meditating in the Himalayas, heard about Sahastrabahu's brutality, he fought a fierce battle against Sahastrabahu and killed him. He then brought to life his father and brothers with his divine powers. And went to the lake to restore his mother to life. But Renukaji explained to Parshuram that she had taken *jal samadhi* and would now permanently live in the lake. However, she promised her son that she would come out of the lake to meet him once in a year - on the occasion of *Kartik Shuddha Ekadashi*. Parshuram also vowed to visit her on the said day

every year, while leaving to live a life of solitude in the Mahendra mountain.

### A joyous reunion

The reunion of the mother and son thus takes place annually. *Mahant* Mohanpuri of Sanyas Ashram, located on the banks of the Renuka Lake, said the fair symbolises the profound affection of a mother for her son and a son's deep regard for his mother. And those who participate in the fair are showered with divine blessings. Having stayed in the ashram for over 28 years, the *mahant* said, earlier, devotees assembled here for 15 days, but now it is restricted to five days.

Boating in the breathtakingly beautiful lake is a big draw for tourists here. And it sees a giant leap during the fair. Kalyan Singh Thakur, who oversees the boating activities, pointed out that



**Waiting for tourists who throng the lake for boating**

hundreds and thousands of people line up for boating on the five days when the fair is on. However, he voiced concern about the risks posed to the lake which is shrinking slowly. As long as the lake remains untouched by commercialisation, it will continue to delight tourists and attract migratory birds which come from as far as Siberia, Thakur contended. He said even though the Indian military officials and river experts had tried to gauge its depth, they have not been successful.

Besides the Renukaji Lake, there is a smaller lake called the Parshuram *tal*. There are many temples and *ghats* around this waterbody too. The place comes alive during the fair, with people making a beeline to have a *darshan* of the deities. A local, Om Prakash Sharma, who runs a photo studio, said Renukaji is an important pilgrimage centre and it is decked up flamboyantly during the annual fair. The celebration lends a spiritual aura to the entire ambience, he added. Sharma underlined that this year's fair was the best as the shopkeepers did a brisk business and the tourists thronging the venue enjoyed the festivities. Anil Sharma, associated with Devicos Plaza hotel situated around 5 km from Renukaji, was overjoyed with the constant footfalls. He said, "The hotel was bursting at the seams during the fair. We had to reluctantly refuse accommodation to many people".

All that started with gusto ended with a heavy feeling as Renukaji and Lord Parshuram bid farewell to each other on the fifth day, with the promise to meet again next year. But it left pilgrims asking for more, as they looked



forward to the holy reunion next year. ■

**The writer is a freelance journalist who specialises in environmental issues.**

## Write away!

*As long as there are news publications, letters to the editor will continue to be written, says A. Radhakrishnan. He gives tips on how to write that perfect letter, which may in itself be a solitary endeavour, but can even help to raise awareness about a social cause.*

**W**RITING letters to the editor is not the prerogative of a chosen few. The right to ventilate one's feelings, frustrations, and suggest solutions to problems besetting us – all of which can combine to do good to the society and the individual, belongs to all. These letters are a part of a collective effort at rejuvenating our society from the abyss it finds itself in. Writing is like 'an itch which grows into a massage'. It is a common platform to espouse social causes and fight social evils.

The importance attached to the writer of letters to the editor has been steadily recognised, one of them being Gorbachev's *glasnost* years ago. Every published letter is worth its weight in gold and no letter-writer is more equal than the other.

However, as with the case in any other field, the 'letter to the editor' column has also the evil of lobbyists seeking to further their causes, which might not necessarily be in the interest of the society at large. Also, we do have those who are content merely seeing their names in print or counting the number of letters published, but such fads wear off sooner or later.

Regular writers of letters to the editor also had formed an association called AILWA (All India Press Letter Writer's Association), which encouraged letter writers by guiding them and also offering them prizes annually.

If you have the urge to write on a subject you feel strongly about, then

put pen to paper. But do so only if you have something new to offer. If it has substance, it will merit consideration. Do not reproduce published opinions. But you have to be personally motivated to be able to move others. Thus a thorough shakeup of our existing system is possible only through the power of the pen, wielded by the enlightened letter-writer, who expresses views fearlessly and without malice.

The 'puny' letter writer has often won battles. Many letters have also been converted by our courts into public interest litigation cases. There is an immediate need for thoughts to be put on to paper, to awaken the authorities from their deep slumber and rid the appalling apathy, which the average citizen exhibits today. What better non-violent way than through the letter to the editor?

Moreover in the process you also arm yourself for the world of journalism, like I did.

### Here are a few guidelines:

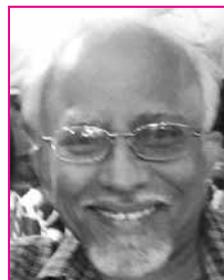
- All letters to the editor have to be essentially a viewpoint and not a rambling essay.
- It has to be topical and lucid, well spelt and grammatically flawless. Normally it should not exceed 350 words.
- All letters should be preferably neatly typed or sent as an email as it is convenient nowadays.
- Understand the subject before

venturing to write it. Be original in thought and provide solutions.

- Never send the same letter to several newspapers. If the subject warrants it, rewrite the letter differently to various newspapers.
- Remember, newspapers get hundreds of letters per day and it is actually an excruciating task to wade through them. Do not be disheartened by non publication. Try, try and you will succeed.
- Persevere to write on all subjects-civic affairs, local, national and international issues. Do not get stuck in a groove. Specialisation is indeed good, but do try and be versatile.

The address of all newspapers will be found on the last page along with the print line or merely Google it. Do not forget to write the date in every letter, it helps scheduling by the harassed sub-editor in charge of the letters column.

Many editors and journalists of today started off being a letter writer, the irrepressible R. K. Karanjia being one of them. Widen your horizons, increase your knowledge and to this end, letter to the editor certainly contributes. ■



**A. Radhakrishnan** is a Pune based freelance journalist, poet, short story writer and a former President of the All India (Press) Letter Writer's Association.

# And now, a pink auto service!

*In the aftermath of the horrific incident of rape in a call taxi in Delhi, efforts are on to come up with viable solutions for safe commuting for women. The city of Bhubaneswar in Odisha has come up with the innovative and well-audited Pink Auto service. Do we finally have a solution to the urban woman's transport woes? asks **Rakhi Ghosh**.*

**E**VEN as India marks the second year of the tragic rape and killing of a 23-year-old student in Delhi, an incident that triggered extensive debate on women's safety in public spaces and even forced the government of the day to enact the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act 2013, widely termed as a "bill of rights" for women, the news of the rape of another young professional in the capital returning home at night in a 'secure' taxi has once again forced everyone to reassess the state of public transportation in cities across India and issues related to women's safety.

In Bhubaneswar, the state capital of Odisha, Ranjita Mallick, 17, has her own nightmarish story to share. This student of a city college was returning one evening from classes at 8 pm, when she found herself in a very vulnerable situation. She narrates, "That night I took an auto rickshaw home. Initially, I was alone in the vehicle. Later, two men got in. I realised that they were drunk when they started misbehaving with me and touching me inappropriately. When I shouted, the auto driver stopped the vehicle and I immediately ran from the spot. But the two men didn't give up. They started following me. When the auto driver tried to stop them he was simply thrashed up. Mercifully, I reached a busy market area and went to the nearest PCO (Public Call Office) booth, from where I called my mother. Till she came to pick me up, I was shivering with fear."

Of course, there are many girls and women across the twin cities of

Bhubaneswar and Cuttack who have been through similar experiences. According to Sujata Panda, former Inspector In-Charge of the Mahila Police Station, Bhubaneswar, "As the city grows and opportunities rise, more and more women are stepping out of their homes for studies or jobs. While some make their own transportation arrangements, everyone cannot afford it. Women commuting by public transport are vulnerable to harassment and abuse by mischievous troublemakers. There have been some cases of rape and abductions in the city where the auto drivers were involved."

## **A woman-friendly auto service**

Today, however, there is one transport service in Bhubaneswar, endorsed by the Bhubaneswar-Cuttack Police Commissionerate, which is not just making heads turn, but is also offering some hope and comfort to the thousands of women and girls commuting every day. It's the Pink Auto service, which not only has the 'women-friendly auto' sticker on the vehicle with a first-aid and suggestion box on board, but its drivers have gone through extensive psychological tests and social and criminal background checks before being certified to ply on the streets.

Commissioner of Police, Bhubaneswar-Cuttack, Dr Rajendra Prasad Sharma, reveals, "Before launching the service earlier this year we ensured that the auto drivers went through psychological analysis and special training to help them interface

better with women passengers. A trained psychologist observed around 270 drivers, who had been selected only after we had looked into their social background and checked if they had any previous criminal record. Among them, 200 drivers cleared the test on every parameter."

Initially, 215 pink autos were pressed into service; now their numbers are up to 300. And although earlier there was a plan to paint the entire auto rickshaw in pink so that people would be able to identify them with ease, it was reconsidered on the request of the auto rickshaw drivers, who settled for painting only a specific portion of the auto rickshaw in the colour.

To provide a safe travel experience to women, the Police Commissionerate has opened up five kiosks in important locations in the city. These are equipped with phones that are also integrated to the police control room. Female passengers can dial the landline number to avail of the service, and in case there is any problem they can be easily tracked by the police. Plans are in the offing to install the global positioning system (GPS) in the pink auto rickshaws to keep tabs on their location as well. "This will definitely provide a safe travel experience to all the women commuters, be it college-goers or working professionals," says Satyabrata Bhoi, Deputy Commissioner of Police.

## **Drivers administered psychological tests**

Women commuters as well as gender activists have welcomed the

introduction of this service. Says Rukmini Panda, a city-based rights activist, "The recent Uber taxi rape incident in Delhi has definitely renewed a deep sense of fear among women commuters across the country. I think many such situations can be averted if authorities take the time to track the past record of those who are part of the transportation system, and sensitise them towards issues like violence against women. In Bhubaneswar, before launching the pink autos for women commuters, they did put the drivers through a psychological test, which is really necessary. Besides this, we should consider holding monthly orientation meetings with the auto drivers regarding gender sensitivity and talk to them about gender violence. Regular interaction will help them to change their mindset towards women commuters."

Activist Namrata Chaddha agrees with Panda's evaluation. She says, "Though late in the day, government

has launched a service that provides a reasonably safer alternative to women. This service should extend to other cities like Cuttack and Rourkela as well, where female commuters chiefly depend on public transport for their mobility. And maybe it would be a good idea to have women drivers riding these pink autos."

On their part, the auto drivers association is happy to be on board, although they firmly feel that the service will flourish only if it is financially viable for the drivers, too. Says Pradip Kumar Samal, Secretary of the Bhubaneswar Auto Rickshaw Mahasangh: "Though the pink autos will stand in key locations, such as the railway station, bus stands, educational institutions and shopping malls, we are apprehensive whether there will be enough women passengers for us to ferry around. It is almost impossible to sustain livelihood by only ferrying women passengers. Whereas we do give preference to women, in their absence we do take

men commuters on board."

For Sandhya Mohanty, her daily commute to the office is not as scary as it used to be. Says she, "I do believe that taking the psychological test of the auto drivers has made a difference. I find the pink auto drivers more supportive towards commuters. They don't argue, pick a fight or use bad language. This should be replicated in other growing cities and towns of the state." Adds Monalisa Parida, who works with a private company and has to often work late, "It is definitely a welcome step, but the authorities should ensure that these kiosks provide service on time. The police should start an awareness campaign to promote pink auto service in the city."

Countrywide, the search is on for safe modes of transport that can give women the freedom to move around their own city without the fear of being violated. Are pink autos the answer? ■

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# Ocean to Ocean

**Author: Susmit Sen with Sehba Imam**

**Publisher: Harper Collins**

**Pages: 149, Price: ₹ 699**

**T**HE guitar hero's story is one of the predominant narratives in music folklore. It allows the reader a peep into the romantic story of the early rebellious, always intelligent, mildly apologetic, but mostly proud life of the virtuoso. Susmit Sen's memoir *Ocean to Ocean*, written with Sehba Imam does not disappoint. The book is remarkably neatly organised into sections that separate the musical influences, the relationships, and the constant pursuit of "expression". A little like the man himself.

First up, the new information. The now familiar childhood battle many creative geniuses have with conventional academics and a possible dyslexic trait. In this aspect, and in general for the manner of living his life, Susmit's father emerges as the real hero in the book. Always supportive, believing, proud.

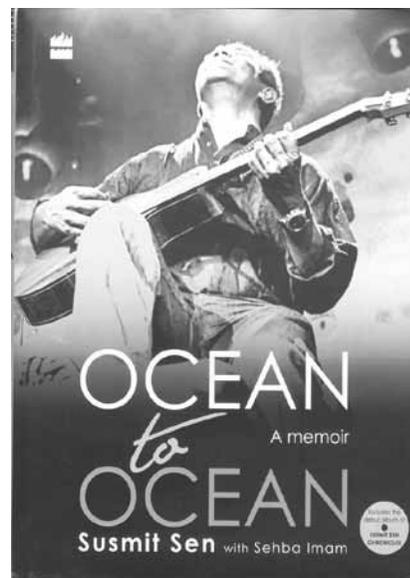
Susmit's inspirations as he seeks to find new forms of expression are revealing. Ali Akbar Khan, Nikhil Banerjee, Bhimsen Joshi and perhaps most so, Mallikarjun Mansur, feature for being individuals who "engaged all the senses". There is other resonance - they carried themselves "without airs, down to earth" (read later in the book: "I have always been a trouser-shirt kind of guy with my colour palette limited to grey, brown, white and black). But musically, it is their spiritual, almost meditative quality to music that Susmit continues to seek. There is also a hat doffed to the soul-stirring quality of Dylan and Cohen, and a sense of being utterly moved by classics like *Dark Side of the Moon*. Interestingly, Queen's *Sheer Heart Attack* gets a special mention.

Somewhat ironic in hindsight is the "Good Times" titled chapter of his "best" years with *Indian Ocean*. Here we

get a view into all that Susmit has left behind. Aseem Chakraborty stands tall for the sheer "taseer", and a voice "like no other ... heard before or since". And for being the human being that he was - warm, no airs, and bearing no grudges.

What Susmit leaves in the attic is interesting too. Relationships with the other *Indian Ocean* bandmates (the core, 1994-2009 configuration) are less fleshed out. When described, these are mysteriously less charitable. Amit Kilam was previously described by Susmit (in Jaideep Verma's seminal "Leaving Home" documentary about the band's life and music), as bringing an incredibly positive transformation to the band, with a unique "capability to break barriers". Amit gets mixed chits now - described as a complete musician, but also obliquely as cause for the separation - shifting the band's focus to presentation, weaving in colors and clothing effects that made the band look like "lozenges in a packet". Amit and Rahul Ram appear to drive the band towards "what the crowd wanted to hear", versus creating new expressions that would drive what the crowd heard next. The equation with Rahul (in many ways a force, and the most colourful persona in the band), is also shrouded in silence, interspersed with not-so-positive throwaway references.

This leaves the reader a little wanting. Shaleen Sharma (early band member, and credible musician in his own right), described well Susmit's role in the creation of the *Indian Ocean*, arguably India's most original and successful band. Susmit's "single minded focus during the early fragile days" kept the band alive and vital - almost every song was weaved around a central idea of Rana's (Susmit's pet



name). This is the band that broke away from the "brown-wannabe-whites" mould, in the words of Rabbi Shergill.

Not unfairly, the reader craves more from Susmit about this process of creation, the interplay between the band-mates, the creative differences and debates, the fraught "verse-chorus versus free-flowing rhythm changes" discussion. These are alluded to, but all too fleetingly.

Perhaps that's the whole point though. It's over, time to move on. And if the 2014 Chronicles' album *Depths of the Ocean* is anything to go by, we might be in for another good run. Another 52-year-old guitarist, Kirk Hammett of *Metallica* thought differently: "there's a signature *Metallica* sound, and if we stray too far from that, our fans gets impatient, or they just don't understand".

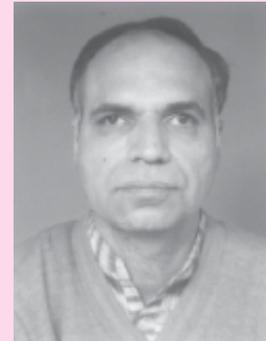
Patience people, you'll understand, maybe.

In any event, when giants like Susmit Sen and Naseeruddin Shah get down to their memoirs and let us in, it isn't really about whether to read or not. These individuals are national treasures, and this book ranks high in this all-too-short list of autobiographies. "Compulsory reading", as one of his less-inspiring Patel Nagar school teachers may have reminded Susmit. ■

**Sachin Rajan is in the business of Leadership Search and Assessment. He has a strong interest in music, books, and where they meet.**

# Rural maternal health – concerns and solutions

*High maternal mortality is a reality in our rural areas due to lack of adequate health services and deep-held superstitious beliefs. Instead of re-inventing the wheel, it would be practical to train the existing dai and health workers, as is being done in the state of Chattisgarh.*



**Bharat Dogra**

is a Delhi-based freelance journalist who writes on social concerns.

**R**EDUCING maternal mortality in remote villages spread far and wide in forest and forest fringe areas, is a huge challenge. A reputed public health organisation *Jan Swasthya Sahyog* (JSS) has attempted to meet this challenge at several levels in Bilaspur district of Chattisgarh.

Traditional midwives already working in these villages have been identified and provided training to first, significantly improve the medical quality of their work, and second, help them better recognise the signs of complicated cases, so that such cases can be immediately referred to the main hospital. The work of *daïs*, particularly with reference to hygiene and important precautions, has been significantly improved. The *daïs*, helped by village health workers look out for early signs of complicated pregnancy cases so that those women can get hospital care at the proper time. They are also trained in matters like simple ways of making the new born cry (if the baby doesn't cry on its own), such as massaging the back of the baby, rubbing the soles, cleaning the head etc. In case of heavy bleeding after birth, they can take emergency steps to check the bleeding till the mother can be taken to the hospital.

Secondly, several ANC (Ante-Natal Care) centres have been set up where all expectant mothers (including those from outside the project area) and from nearby villages, can come for essential tests as well as overall guidance on safe motherhood. Along with counselling, the women go for essential tests relating to sickle-cell, haemoglobin, hepatitis B, proteins in urine, HIV, VDRI and anaemia. This effort is supported by health sub-centres in the form of provision of essential medicines and supplements, such as iron and calcium tablets. Importance of good nutrition for expectant mothers, and later for breast feeding mothers is emphasised time and

again. Essential medicines for protection from malaria are also provided at the proper time (once every week after 3 months of pregnancy), along with a mosquito net.

Dr. Suhas Kadam, co-ordinator of Community Medicine says, "There are many prevailing beliefs in the area which are contrary to medical advice. For example, the insistence on immediate bathing of the newborn is not advisable as the newborn needs warmth. Sometimes, women do not feed the newborn baby for three or four days, while feeding should start immediately. Counselling at ANC centres helps to dispel such superstitions.

JSS made a significant effort to understand the causes of maternal death by undertaking a detailed survey of 55 maternal deaths. Direct and indirect, all types of factors which contributed to the tragedy were considered and discussed. Direct causes are those related to the pregnancy and delivery processes - hemorrhage, sepsis, hypertensive disorders of pregnancy, obstructed labour, abortion. Indirect causes include HIV, TB, malaria, hepatitis, anaemia, heart conditions etc. which are not caused by pregnancy, but become more risky because of the woman's pregnant status. A significant aspect of this study was that social causes also got due recognition along with clinical causes.

On the basis of such studies the JSS has listed details of better obstetric technology, improved hospital technology, better transport facilities, and overall improvement in comprehensive health care which are needed to reduce maternal mortality. What is more, this research reveals that overall correction of inequalities at all levels, including gender and rural-urban inequalities are needed to ensure that mothers in particular, and women in general, from the poorest families in our remote villages, get proper health care. ■

# Denationalisation - the art of the possible?

*The Central Government has decided to denationalise the mining and selling of coal in the aftermath of the alleged corruption in coal block allocations. Will this make the mining industry more efficient? What will be the actual impact of this on the coal industry and the sectors dependent on it? A close look at the issue.*



**Anuradha Kalhan**

is a Fellow at Teen Murti, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (NMML).

It may soon become possible to mine and sell coal commercially; the government sees an opportunity both in its parliamentary strength, and in the recent coal mining disarray. Faulty procedures followed by the previous governments in allocating coal blocks led to an outcry over 'corruption'; eventually, the Supreme Court cancelled 204 (this includes operational, about to become operational and yet to be explored mines) coal block allocations in October 2014. India's power sector remains highly coal dependent (despite all the talk of renewable, clean energy); besides power, iron and steel and the cement industries are major users of coal. To avert an apparent power sector catastrophe, the government promulgated the Coal Mines (Special Provisions) Ordinance, October 2014, to auction the cancelled coal blocks.

Since the 1973 Coal Mines Nationalisation Act, coal mining has mostly been in the public sector. Nationalisation was considered necessary to conserve and allocate the scarce natural resource towards planned usage. Equally critical was the issue of land and villages above and around the coal mines. Some private players were allowed to mine and use for specified purposes, and only as captive end users, they were not to sell coal. Coal India Limited, the largest public sector player in the mining sector, enjoyed a unique status.

Under the provisions of the Coal Bearing Areas (Acquisition & Development) (CBA) Act, 1957, Coal India Limited acquired the same status of becoming a deemed lessee of the concerned state governments, in relation to the lands over the coal bearing areas acquired under this Act. The deemed leases being in the nature of statutory leases, Coal India Limited did not have to obtain separate leases under the MMRD Act, 1957, from the concerned state government in respect of the nationalised mines and the coal bearing lands acquired under the CBA Act.

However, in case, any of the companies eligible to do coal mining in the country including CIL and the other government and private coal companies, wanted to acquire coal bearing lands under the Land Acquisition Act, 1894, they were required to obtain coal mining leases from the central government and the concerned state governments in that order. The coal mining leases under the relevant regulatory Act were granted for 20-30 years initially, which were to be renewed for a further period of 20 years with the previous approval of the central government. The coal mining leases were ordinarily subject to a ceiling of 10 sq. kms.

Ostensibly under multi-lateral financial institution pressure to restructure and deregulate the economy, the post liberalisation period made it possible to amend the Act (1993) and allow private companies to mine coal (for captive consumption). Up to this point, private companies still could not mine to sell coal.

In December 2014, the Coal Mines (Special Provisions) Bill 2014 was introduced. The Bill provides for allocation of coal mines and the right, title and interest in and over the land and mine infrastructure, together with mining leases, to successful bidders. This will occur through a transparent e-bidding process. This time it is possible to make the land above and coal below available to the highest bidders without end use restrictions. It is suggested that this will make the mining industry more efficient.

The new Bill that replaces the ordinance seeks to allow commercial mining in the country, apart from re-allocating 72 of the cancelled 'operational' coal mines for end-usage to the power, steel and cement sectors. So in effect, 'elimination of corruption' and 'introduction of transparency' have become both the canopy and armoury with which the forces of denationalisation can march forward. ■



## Celebrating Republic Day

Every year on Republic Day, a grand parade is held in the capital New Delhi. The parade begins from the Rashtrapati Bhavan and goes along the Rajpath, past India Gate up to the Red Fort. Different contingents of the Army, the Navy and the Air Force march past wearing their official decorations. The President of India who is the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces takes the salute.

All the latest acquisitions of the Armed Forces such as missiles, tanks, radar, fighter aircraft, etc. are proudly displayed during the parade. Apart from the Armed Forces, NCC, Home Guard, police and civil defence contingents also participate in the parade.

The Military display is followed by a vibrant cultural display. Various states showcase their rich cultural heritage in the form of colourful tableaux. School children from all over the country also participate in the parade. Children who have won bravery awards come riding in on a gaily-caparisoned elephant. The most eagerly awaited part is the fly past



when the IAF fighter planes roar past the dais saluting the President.

Before the parade begins, the Prime Minister lays a wreath at the Amar Jawan Jyoti at India Gate, saluting the countless soldiers who sacrificed their lives for the country. Then the President arrives with the chief guest for the occasion, usually a visiting head of state. A 21-gun salute is presented and the President unfurls the Tricolour as the national anthem is played.

### A STORY

## A cartload of almonds

A squirrel joined the service of the King of the forest, the lion.

He did whatever work was given to him, quickly and well. The lion became fond of him and promised to give him a cartload of almonds as pension when he retired.

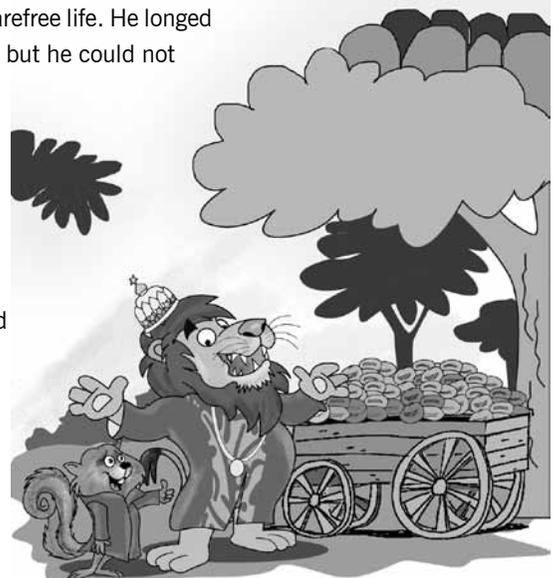
The squirrel envied the other squirrels in the forest because of their carefree life. He longed to run up and down trees and leap from branch to branch like them but he could not leave the king's side and even if he could he had to move with courtly dignity. He consoled himself with the thought that at the end of his career, he would receive a cartload of almonds, a food that few squirrels got to taste in their lifetime.

"They will envy me then," he would tell himself.

The years passed. The squirrel became old and then it was time for him to retire. The king gave a grand banquet in his honour and at the end of it, presented him with a cartload of almonds as he had promised.

The squirrel had waited long for this day but when he saw the almonds, he was seized with sadness. He realised they were of no use to him now. He had lost all his teeth.

— A Russian folktale





## FIVE QUESTIONS

## Comet breaking news

### When was Rosetta launched and by whom?

The robotic space probe was launched on March 2, 2004 by the European Space Agency. Its target was to reach the comet 67P/Churyumov–Gerasimenko. Travelling a distance of 4 billion miles, it reached the comet in August 2014 and entered its orbit on September 10.

### What is its mission?

Rosetta's mission is to gather information about comets, about how they were formed. Scientists hope that its data will help them understand the formation of the solar system better.

### What are its achievements so far?

Its greatest success has been landing the Philae probe on the comet nucleus of Churyumov–Gerasimenko on November 12, a first in the history of space exploration. On the way to the comet, it also took pictures of the asteroids Steins and Lutetia.



Rosetta is the first spacecraft to orbit a comet.

### How did Philae land on the comet nucleus?

It was not a smooth landing as hoped for. The comet has extremely weak gravity. When the probe landed on it for the first time, it bounced twice; it took two hours for the probe to return to the surface after the first bounce. It finally came to rest in a tilted position against the shadow of a cliff, thereby

limiting the amount of sunlight reaching its solar panels.

### What is the current status of Philae?

As its solar batteries could not be recharged adequately by sunlight, the probe went into hibernation after transmitting data for 57 hours. It is hoped that as the comet makes its way to the Sun, the probe will

receive enough sunlight to get recharged and resume its investigations.

## When you fly kites during *Makar Sankranti*...

Remember...

- Not to fly them on the roads.
- To stay away from power lines that can cause serious injuries and even death.
- To avoid flying them near an airport - you don't want to disturb a low-flying aircraft or get in its flight path.
- And last and most important, avoid using glass-coated strings that can injure birds and other animals.



## PUZZLE

## Crack the code

Supriya is in a foreign country and is unable to open her suitcase as she has forgotten the combination lock code. Can you help Supriya unlock her suitcase with the help of clues given? It is a four-digit number.

- The first digit is neither prime nor composite.
- The last digit is not a natural number but is a whole number.
- The second digit is a multiple of 4.
- The last two digits form a number that is five times the number formed by the first two digits.



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# PANDIT CHIDANAND NAGARKAR

A genius who died young ( 1918-1971)

**T**HE world of Hindustani classical music suffered a tragic loss when Chidanand Nagarkar passed away suddenly in Mumbai on 26 May 1971, at the age of 51. His versatility in many fields—cricket, dance, astrology, spirituality and occult sciences, besides his originality and virtuosity as a vocalist, scholar, composer and innovator, put him in a class by himself. He was equally adept as a percussionist and harmoniumist, too.

Nagarkar inherited his legacy of artistic talent from his father, who had a flair for devotional music and stage acting. The home of the Nagarkars was, in fact, a rendezvous place for musical celebrities of the eminence of Ustad Faiyaz Khan. It is natural that such an environment nurtured the sensibilities of young Chidanand right from infancy.

Chidanand was placed under the tutelage of Govind Vithal Bhawe, a local vocalist who gave him some sound grounding in the basics of Hindustani music. For advanced studies, he was sent to Lucknow to pursue under the guidance and direction of Acharya S.N. Ratanjankar at the *Bhatkande Sangeet Vidyapeeth*.

Acharya Ratanjankar was the head of the institution and had already made his mark as one of the most eminent *gurus* of the time in the field. He discovered in his pupil all the makings of a future celebrity, and gave him the full benefit of his scientific method of instruction in all the genres of Hindustani music, ranging from *dhrupad*, *dhamar* and *khayal* to *tappa* and *thumri*. In the course of time, Chidanand achieved eminence in the field, so much so that at the age of 26, he was appointed as the first Principal of the newly started *Bharatiya Sangeet Nartan Shiksha Peeth* under the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, in Mumbai.

With the initiative and drive so typical of him, Nagarkar soon addressed himself to the task of extending the scope of the activities of the institution in various ways. At the college, he set up a music circle *Sangeet Vrind*, and enlisted spontaneous cooperation of a glorious line-up of musical luminaries like Kesarbai Kerkar, Ali Akbar Khan and several

others, to perform.

He also organised marathon *sangeet sammelans* annually, in observance of the death anniversary of Pt. Vishnu Narayan Bhatkande, who was his *guru's guru*. A distinct feature of this event was the representation given to the young emerging talent, side by side with veterans, which was a trend setter. The annual soirees are still being held with resounding success at the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan. Nagarkar was rightly acclaimed as a musical genius with a

fine sense for the spectacular. His was a massive mode of expression, often reminiscent of Faiyaz Khan, but there was no undiscerning imitation in his approach. Nagarkar's depictions had an uncanny blend of classical restraint and emotional freedom of the kind that showed his reverence of tradition, and catholicity of outlook in keeping with the changing times.

A bold experimenter and composer, Nagarkar innovated a string of melodies *Kaishiki-Ranjini*, *Ambikar-Sarang* and *Yoga-Shri* to name only a few. He sang them in self-composed *bandishes*. Most of these ragas and *bandishes* have achieved pride of place in the vast repository of Hindustani *ragas*.

Equally deep was Nagarkar's involvement in other fields. He had taken lessons in *kathak* dance from the great Shambhu Maharaj. He was a self taught harmoniumist and played the table with practiced ease. He had studied astrology and could quote chapter and verse from Sanskrit treatises on the subject, in support of his predictions. Nagarkar was as temperamental and moody as he was kind and affectionate. There were occasions for sharp exchanges and humorous encounters as well. But in the final analysis, he was a man with childlike simplicity, who bore neither grudge nor malice, towards friends like me. ■



**(The writer, late Mohan Nadkarni was one of India's noted Hindustani musicologists, and music critic of *The Times of India*, for over 50 years. Article courtesy: Kanara Saraswati)**

# PANDIT KRISHNARAO G. GINDE

A genial giant among musicians (1925-1994)

**J**ULY 13 1994 was a dark day for Hindustani music, when Sangeetacharya K.G. Ginde passed away in Mumbai. He was a genial giant among musicians, with a ready wit and explosive laugh. His *shishyas* had known him as an uncompromising disciplinarian when it came to music, yet a kind-hearted *guru* whose *gyan* was an open book, verily an encyclopedia of Hindustan music, for everyone to refer to.

To his contemporaries at the Maris College of Music, Lucknow (now the *Bhatkande Sangeet Vidyapeeth*), he had endeared himself as *chhotoo* (the young one), but as time is the witness, Pt. Ginde was *chhotoo* only in name, called so in this small coterie of illustrious *guru bandhus* which included Chidanand Nagarkar, S.C.R. Bhat, Dinkar Kaikini, Govindrao Dantale, Sumati Mutatkar and V.G. Jog. His large, barrel-chested figure strode like a colossus on the music scene.

Krishna Ginde was born in the humble hamlet of Bailhongal in Karnataka on 26 December 1925. Pandit Kumar Gandharva and he had been childhood friends and their genius in music grew apace together. Krishna's love for music was fostered by his elder brother Ram, whose early guidance spurred Krishna to carve out a career in music under the personal tutelage of Acharya S.N. Ratanjankar, alias Annasaheb. What's more, he got the opportunity to hear the music of the reigning maestros of the time, for the abode of Annasaheb was like a Mecca of musicians. The *bandishes* that poured from the prolific pen of Annasaheb found eloquent expression in the mellifluous voice of Ginde. Another binding influence during his formative years was that of his senior *guru-bandhu* Pt. S.C.R. Bhat, who in course went on to partner him in *jugal-gaan* of *khayal*, *dhrupad* and *dhamar gayaki*. Krishna Ginde attained the degree of Master of Music (*Sangeet Nipun*) at Lucknow, winning the coveted gold medal. He stayed on to serve on the faculty of *Bhatkande Sangeet Vidyapeeth* for eight years. His association with Annasaheb extended over 15 years during which Ginde gratefully assimilated the subtleties and finer nuances of no

less than 250 individual *bandishes* which he could recall at will during his concerts and lecture demonstrations.

Annasaheb remained his guiding spirit until 1974. At his bidding, Ginde joined the music faculty of *Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan* as the vice principal when the late K.M. Munshi founded the *Bhavan's Sangeet Nartan Shikshapeeth* in 1946. In 1961, he was invited to join *Shreevallabh Sangeetalaya* as its Principal and continued to serve the institution to the very end. In recognition of his long illustrious record, the *Sangeet Ashram* conferred on him the honorary doctorate of *Sangeetacharya*.

Pt. Ginde was a *karmayogi* by temperament, who never aspired for honours and titles. Single minded devotion to his *guru*, Acharya Ratanjankar, was an overriding facet of his personality and deportment as a musician. In 1985, the year of his *shashti poorti* (completion of 60 years of life), he rededicated himself to the works and ideas of his *guru* by establishing the *Acharya S.N. Ratanjankar Foundation*.

Pt. Ginde then plunged into a phase of frenzied activity for preserving and promoting his *guru's* work with a missionary zeal. He saw to it that all the compositions, articles and works of the Acharya, many of which were out of print, were made available to the music community. He recorded most of Annasaheb's compositions for the archives of *Sangeet Research Academy* in Calcutta. He believed that the bounty of Hindustani music should be made available to the common man at an affordable price, and put this philosophy into practice in all the activities of the foundation and *Sujan Sangeet Samaroh*, a music festival. When the curtain came down on the *Samaroh* in 1994, in which the last of Annasaheb's works was released by the foundation, Pt. Ginde expressed satisfaction that his life's mission had been accomplished. He died a happy man becoming one with the ethos of music. ■

(The writer, late Sumit Savur was an eminent music critic.  
Article courtesy: Kanara Saraswat)

# JAGJIT SINGH

The Unforgettable (1941-2011)

A little over three years ago, on the morning of 10 October 2011, music lovers across the world were in for a shock. *Ghazal* legend Jagjit Singh had passed away at the age of 70, after suffering a brain haemorrhage a couple of weeks earlier.

Suddenly, albums like *The Unforgettables*, *A Milestone*, *The Latest* and *Mirza Ghalib*, as well as film hits from *Prem Geet*, *Arth* and *Saath Saath*, came to mind. The songs *Baat niklegi to phir*, *Woh kaagaz ki kashti*, *Duniya jisey kehte hain*, *Sadma tho hai mujhe bhi*, *Honto se choolon tum*, *Sarakhti jaaye rukh se naqaab*, *Tum itna jo muskura rahe ho*, *Hazaaron khwaishein aisi* were among those played repeatedly.

An era was indeed over. Over the years, Jagjit had played a major role in spreading the reach of *ghazal* among the masses. Besides using simpler poetry that could be understood by a wider cross-section of listeners, he introduced musical instruments like the guitar, saxophone and keyboard to a genre which earlier relied mainly on *tabla*, *harmonium* and *sarangi*.

Thanks to his efforts, *ghazals* were also used in a major way in films in the 1980s. Though that wasn't a new phenomenon – *ghazals* had been in the film music repertoire for years – artistes like Jagjit, Pankaj Udhas and Talat Aziz took the *ghazal* wave of the 1980s successfully to reach the more lyrically-inclined film music buff.

There have often been arguments that Jagjit's earlier work, especially with wife Chitra Singh, were far superior in content and class – even this writer finds the initial albums more appealing. But that's not to discount the songs he recorded as a solo artiste, once Chitra stopped singing following the death of their son Vivek in an accident in 1990.

Though Jagjit tended to sound repetitive at times and was also inclined towards rehashing his own older tunes, albums like *Sajda* with Lata Mangeshkar, *Silsilay* with Javed Akhtar and *Marasim* with Gulzar, were all prime examples of his class. The film gems kept coming too – *Hoshwalon ko khabar kya'* (from *Sarfaroosh*), *Badi naazuk hai* (from *Joggers'*

*Park*) and *Jaagke kaati saari raina* (from *Leela*) being among all-time favourites.

Strangely enough, Jagjit's devotional recordings never became as popular as they deserved to be. Over the years, he recorded some outstanding songs like *Varde varde varde*, *Tum karuna ke saagar ho*, *Hey Ram hey Ram*, *Baanke Bihari*, *Jai Ganesh Deva* and *Tum dhoondo mujhe Gopal*. In fact, during his last seven or eight years, he concentrated more on *bhajans*. However, these albums weren't marketed too well, and maybe because he was still identified only as a *ghazal* singer, exposure was relatively low, and so were sales.

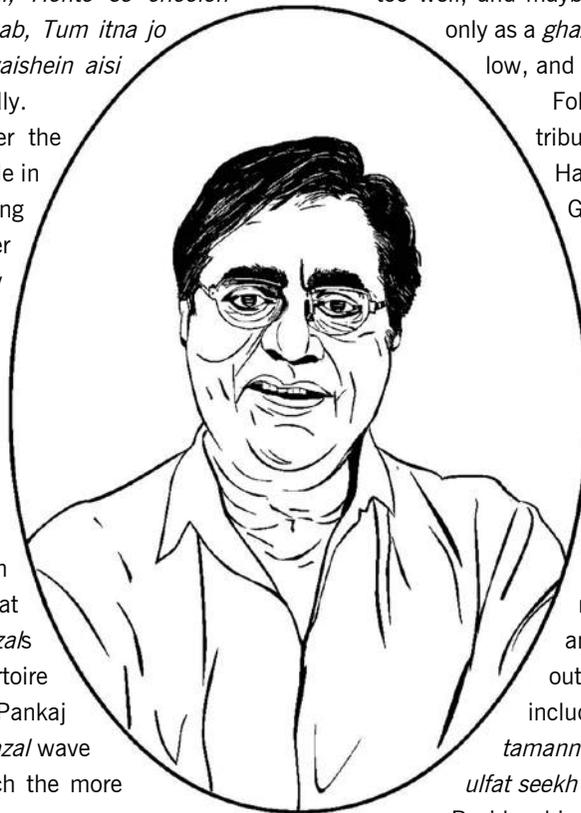
Following Jagjit's demise, many tribute concerts were held by singers Hariharan, Jaswinder Singh, Ghansham Vaswani, Ashok Khosla and Tauseef Akhtar. Sales of his earlier albums picked up for a few months.

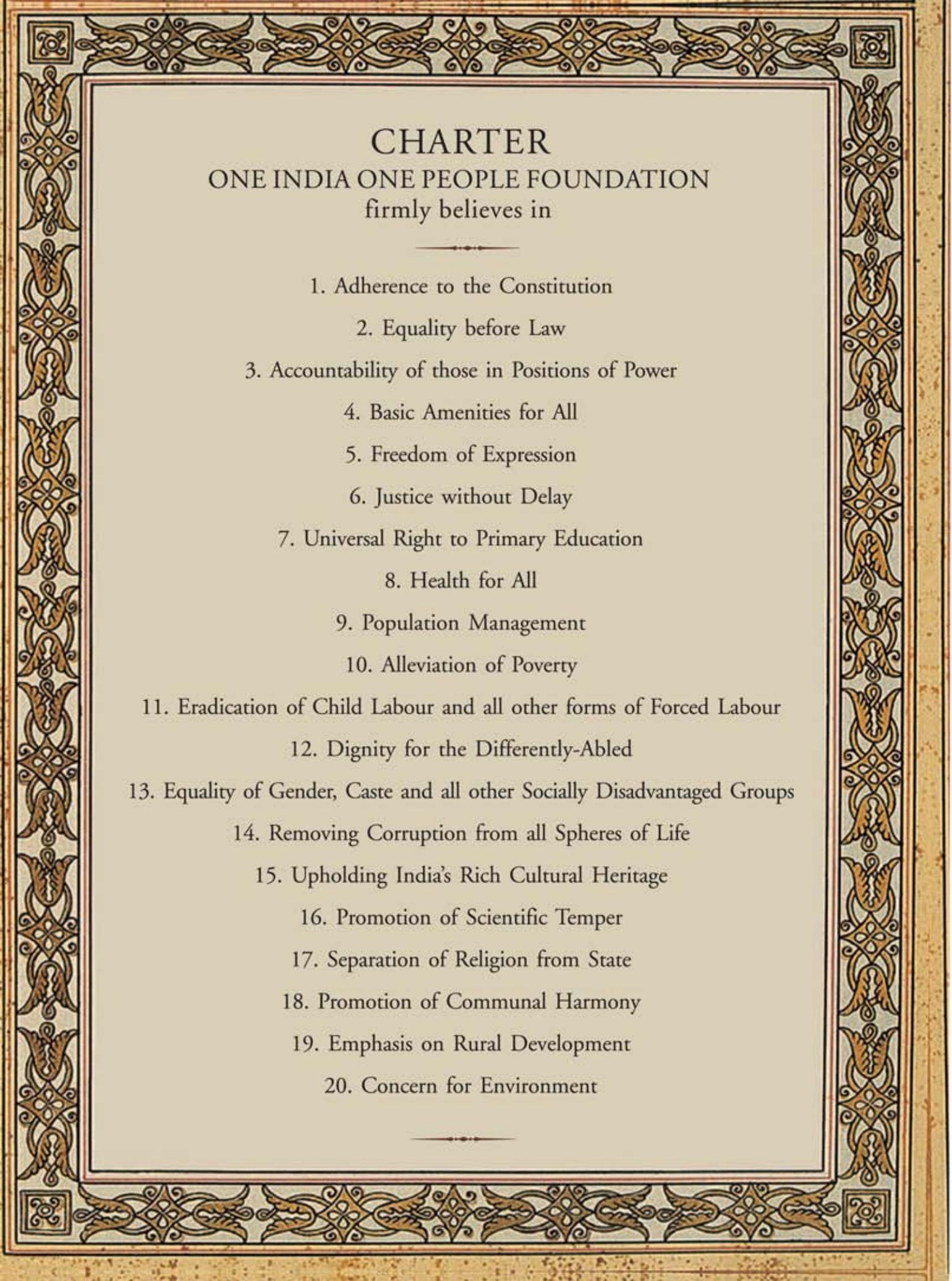
There were some new releases too. T-Series came out with a two-CD compilation *Alvida*. For her part, Chitra Singh facilitated two albums of Jagjit's previously-unreleased music. In 2012, Sony Music marketed *The Master & His Magic* and last year, Universal Music put out *The Voice from Beyond*, which included poet Shahryaar's *Zindagi jaisi tamanna thi* and Dagh Dehlvi's *Rasm-ulfat seekh agaya koi*.

Besides his unique singing style and sheer professionalism, many remember him for his spontaneous sense of humour, and his passion for horses and horse-racing. In normal life, he would often dress up in jeans, Lacoste T-shirts, sports shoes and Rayban sunglasses, and he wasn't fussy about wearing *kurtas* for photo shoots. "My face won't change," he would joke. Today, Jagjit's music lives on. For an entire generation of *ghazal* fans, his songs will create magic forever. ■

– Narendra Kusnur has been a music critic and columnist for over two decades. He has covered both Indian and international music extensively, and enjoys various genres like Hindustani classical, Carnatic, ghazals, old film music, regional music, western classical, rock, pop and jazz. He has also been involved with the music industry as a label manager with EMI Music India, and as a corporate trainer with Reliance TimeOut books and music stores.

(Sketches of Great Indians by C.D. Rane)





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# WHO AM I?

- Am I a Hindu first or an Indian first?*  
*Am I a Muslim first or an Indian first?*  
*Am I a Christian first or an Indian first?*  
*Am I a Buddhist first or an Indian first?*  
*Am I a Brahmin first or an Indian first?*  
*Am I a Dalit first or an Indian first?*  
*Am I a South Indian first or an Indian first?*  
*Am I a North Indian first or an Indian first?*  
*Am I the President of India first or an Indian first?*  
*Am I the Prime Minister of India first or an Indian first?*  
*Am I the Commander-in-Chief first or an Indian first?*  
*Am I a supporter of any 'ism' first or an Indian first?*  
*Am I a white-collar/blue collar worker first or an Indian first?*  
*Am I a youth/senior citizen first or an Indian first?*

*In all cases you are Indian First, Last and Always.  
Be a Proud Indian. Make this country Great, Strong and United.*



Sadanand A. Shetty, Founder Editor

(October 9<sup>th</sup>, 1930 – February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2007)

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