5 FAMOUS SARANGI PLAYERS: WHAT MUSICIANS REMEMBER

5.1 *What defines a great sarangi player?*

Who were the great sarangi players of the last century-and-a-half? And why were they well-known? Whenever there has been an opportunity I have put this question to contemporary sarangi players, the sons and students of sarangi maestros of the past and, of course, vocalists. In the first stages of my research, as a sarangi student, I rarely made notes (following the established tradition of learning things by heart), and I never pressed a point when I felt the musicians did not want to discuss the issue.[1]

The obvious disadvantage of this method was that some of what the old musicians told me escaped my mind. The advantage was that I began to understand the meaning of oral tradition: whatever is important will always be remembered and whatever is redundant is soon forgotten. Another advantage (perhaps the greatest) was that I learned the music, and sarangi players began to trust me. Over the years, they came to realize that I was genuinely interested in their art and that I did not intend to 'steal' their knowledge for personal gain.

Returning to the original question: Who were the famous sarangi players and how can one make a distinction between maestros and ordinary musicians?[2] It is not an easy question because it requires a definition of 'famous' or 'great'. Everyone who has studied the history of Indian music knows that not all the great masters were equally famous, certainly not when India was divided into many kingdoms and states. Writing about the classical music of India in 1917, Coomaraswamy observed:

> It is the chamber-music of an aristocratic society, where the patron retains musicians for his own entertainment and for the pleasure of the circle of his friends; or it is temple music, where the musician is the servant of God. The public concert is unknown, and the livelihood of the artist does not depend upon his ability and will to amuse the crowd. . .[3]

Thus, musicians usually led a reclusive life, only performing for the king or *zamindar*, or in the temples, and only if their fame spread far and wide would they travel all over the country to other courts. In other words, fame was a relative concept and, in this case, rarely reached beyond circles of musicians and connoisseurs.

Sarangi players were the least-known of all musicians because they had to play 'second fiddle' and were usually overshadowed by vocalists. Yet, a number of sarangi players were admired, and they are remembered as great musicians. Great, because some of them had a tremendous knowledge of the traditional repertoire, whilst others were masters of the lighter genres. Others again were unchallenged accompanists or known for their solo performances. When sarangi players combined these qualities and also developed a personal style which had depth and appeal, even their arch-enemies (and there were many of them) could not but recognize them as great masters.

To my knowledge, at least, four veteran sarangi players have been unanimously acknowledged as maestros in this century: Mamman Khan, Bundu Khan, Gopal Mishra and Ram Narayan. There are many others, however, whose names turn up repeatedly in conversations with musicians, whether in Bombay,

Poona, Delhi, Banaras or Calcutta. When I asked a renowned singer, one of the old-timers, who he considered the best sarangi player he had ever heard, he replied philosophically:

> It is hard to compare. One of them was the best in 1920, another in 1945, and a third one in 1965. They could not play the same *raga* at the same time, so it is difficult to say who was better. But Abdul Aziz Khan, Ashiq Hussain Khan, Abdul Majid Khan and Ahmadi Khan were really very good musicians and considered among the best. Mamman Khan, the ustad of Bundu Khan, was also an excellent sarangi player. He played mainly solo and had a great sense of intonation. . . These musicians also learned vocal music; that is why they were much better than ordinary sarangi players.[4]

Had sarangi players been properly recorded in this century, or their names at least mentioned in music literature, or on the record sleeves of famous vocal recordings, I would not have had to rely on the opinion of living musicians alone. As it is, I have to listen critically and judge for myself whether what I have been told represents the 'truth', or whether my informants have showered undue praise on their favourite musicians.

I have been fortunate to be in good company. Of the masters whom I have spent a great deal of time with, several were (and are) very experienced performers and authorities in their field. I rate particularly highly the opinion of senior vocalists who travelled all over the country. These vocalists have had the opportunity to perform with a variety of sarangi players, and those who intrigued them by their mastery have left a deep impression on their memory.

It is surprising how one sometimes finds vocalists who are reluctant to talk about sarangi players. Quite often they feel superior to them, and one gets the impression that a singer puts down a particular sarangi player because he was simply too good, too knowledgeable, or perhaps too self-confident. It should never be forgotten that singers and sarangi players were competing with each other, and that there existed a *jalousie de métier*. Singers were responsible for the idea that the sarangi does not have its own identity, its own repertoire or 'literature'.

> When sarangi players accompany vocalists, they imitate them and try to remember the good phrases and compositions. Then they practise these and give training to vocalists, especially professional songstresses. . . Most sarangi players, however, are unable to remember *antaras,* because an *antara* is repeated only once or twice, whereas a *sthayi* is repeated over and over again.[5]

Undoubtedly, most sarangi players gain knowledge and inspiration from accompanying great vocalists, and they remain very faithful to the ideals of *gayaki ang.* It is also true that many sarangi players do not pay attention to the full development of compositions. It would be a gross exaggeration, however, to state that everything sarangi players play is just a reflection of what singers sing. A good sarangi player is not only an instrumentalist but also a singer, and, therefore, has a deep understanding of the two main branches of Hindustani music. It is a unique musician indeed who can render an instrumental *alap* or *jor,* and a vocal *khayal, tarana, thumri* or *tappa* with equal mastery.

To understand this, one has to spend much time with expert sarangi players, some of whom exhibit considerable knowledge about their ancestors and colleagues. Information from sarangi players about other sarangi players may be biased, however. Particularly when they talk about successful colleagues, one should be on one's guard. When they praise family members, one should always take their opinion with a pinch of salt, unless other sources confirm their observations. Obviously, a sarangi player from Moradabad (or any other place for that matter) will tend to exaggerate the importance of a local celebrity who is known only in Moradabad and not elsewhere.[6]

It makes me sad to realize that I was born much too late to hear and meet some of the great sarangi players of this century, to be able to do justice to their music. Many questions about important players and particular styles of playing remain unanswered. India is a vast country and until recently each city and town had a number of sarangi players, great or small. The sarangi was by far the most prominent stringed instrument,and it is unavoidable that numerous artists who have made a mark in this field will have escaped my attention. Similarly, quite a few distinguished sarangi players whose names are known to me, will be left out of the discussion. Lack of space forces me to make a selection, and I can only apologize to contemporary sarangi players, or the offspring of well-known artists, who feel offended by my choice.

5.2 *Artists of the old school*

The most important region to produce a great number of sarangi players, over the last two centuries, was a large area in Uttar Pradesh and Haryana comprising a group of towns and cities surrounding Delhi. These included Sonipat, Panipat, Kirana, Saharanpur, Muzzafarnagar, Meerut, Moradabad, Bulandshahr, Jhajjar, etc. The professional musicians who lived in these towns were mainly Muslims, interrelated by marriage, and they belonged to the *dhadhi* (*dhari*) or *mirasi* community. "*Mirasis* were (and some still are) rural musicians whose speciality, aside from providing musical entertainment at major celebrations, was the maintaining of genealogies for their clients. Their urban counterparts who have entered the classical tradition . . . provide the vast majority of sarangi and *tabla* players in North India", writes Daniel M. Neuman.[7] Not only that, the *mirasi* families also provide (and have provided from the 19th century onwards) a vast number of vocalists, and we cannot but disagree with Neuman's hypothesis that *mirasis* were solely accompanists who were socially and musically separated from the soloists.

The Kirana and Patiala *gharanas* were, and still are, powerful vocal schools, and we will see that several other established families of sarangi players also claim that their ancestors were singers. If we take this claim seriously, it means that there was not only a transition from accompanist (sarangi player) to soloist (vocalist) during this and the last century, but also (although less common) from vocalist to sarangi player. This is not so surprising if we remember that sarangi players who originally settled down in urban centres were singers using their sarangi as accompaniment.

HAIDER BAKHSH—The line of sarangi players whose ancestors trace their origin to Sonipat and Panipat, probably produced the largest number of artists. Haider Bakhsh of Agra is always mentioned as the first sarangi player in that tradition.[8] With him, in fact, the oral tradition of sarangi-playing begins, and it is said that instead of pursuing

a vocal career, as his ancestors did, he chose to dedicate his life to the sarangi. It seems that Haider Bakhsh was responsible for the sophisticated technique of playing the sarangi, and he was also the first source of inspiration behind 'modern' sarangi-playing, giving the instrument its 'classical' status. In other words, with him there begins a new (and probably the most important) phase in the development of sarangi-playing; a phase which corresponds to the evolution of the large, 'modern' sarangi, some time during the first half of the 19th century.

Haider Bakhsh was a contemporary of the famous vocalist Tanras Khan from Delhi, and, like this great singer, he was a court musician of the last Mughal Emperor, Bahadur Shah II. As the following story reveals, even Haddu and Hassu Khan, the matchless singers from Gwalior, had to admit that his sarangi-playing was superb.

> When Haider Bakhsh heard that these singers abused every sarangi player, and that no sarangi player had the courage to play with them, he headed for Gwalior. Instead of contacting the musicians' community upon arrival, he decided to stay at an inn, so as to remain anonymous, to have an opportunity to listen to the brothers and become familiar with their style.
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> As soon as he felt sure that he could tackle them, he made his appearance in the community, introducing himself as the head (*khalifa*) of the Panipat school of music. As was the custom in those days, dinner was served, after which a recital took place where the host was the first performer. When the famous brothers were about to sing, Haider Bakhsh interrupted them, saying: 'Sirs, I wish to play with you.' Although they objected, making all kinds of grimaces and insinuations, the other musicians present reminded them that Haider Bakhsh was a guest and a well-known musician as well, and that he should be given a chance to play. When they finally agreed, Haider Bakhsh said that he would only play if he was allowed to sit between the two singers. Naturally, they objected to his unusual demand, but once again they were persuaded by the gathering to give in.
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> It is told that as soon as Haider Bakhsh began to play, both the brothers stopped singing and began to listen attentively to the powerful music which emanated from his sarangi. After the recital was over, Haddu Khan exclaimed: 'All the others play sarangi, but you play saranga. You are the first one who has brought honour to this instrument.'[9]

Thus, the oral tradition credits Haider Bakhsh with playing such a powerful 'male' sarangi (i.e. 'saranga') that he was able to play solo and accompany the famous ustads, whereas the great majority of artists played their 'female' sarangi only with women singers.

MIRACH KHAN—Haider Bakhsh became known as the founder of a new tradition. The most legendary sarangi player of the latter half of the 19th century, however, was Mirach Khan, who got his nickname from playing the sarangi in a very 'spicy' and appealing way. He was known for possessing a lightning fingering technique and his ability to make the sarangi 'talk'. His fame was widespread, and D. C. Vedi remembers that his guru, Bhaskarrao Bakhle, and many other musicians of that generation often praised him. "The ruler by whom he was appointed court musician had so much respect for this artist that as a token of honour his sarangi was transported in a palanquin, carried by four persons."[10]

Mirach Khan was the foremost disciple of Haider Bakhsh, who was childless, and for many years he practised in front of his ustad, playing only scales and a few exercises. Bimala P. Chattopadhyaya, an octogenarian singer from Calcutta, related the following anecdote to me:

> Once an old sarangi player who was asked to accompany a well-known singer, visited Haider Bakhsh. He requested him to send a student to play *naghma* for support, upon which Haider Bakhsh told Mirach Khan to join the old musician. Whilst the performance progressed, it became obvious that the old sarangi player could not follow the complex *tanas* of the vocalist. Mirach Khan then decided to take the lead, unaware that Haider Bakhsh had secretly entered the room where the recital took place.
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> When Mirach Khan returned home his master told him that he was surprised and pleased to hear that his disciple could accompany the singer as competently as he himself would have done. He was furious, however, that Mirach Khan had disobeyed his order that he should only play *naghma*, and, worse, had humiliated the old musician who was his senior. Haider Bakhsh was so outraged by these two offenses that he disowned Mirach Khan and sent him away.
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> For seven years, it is said, Mirach Khan practised twelve hours a day. He could follow every vocalist and never missed a single note. . .

What really happened was that Haider Bakhsh's relatives had complained that he gave his knowledge and attention to an outsider of the *khandan*. Haider Bakhsh tried to pacify them by saying, "I have only given him two-and-a-half *paltas*", and added that his own family members were hardly as dedicated to the sarangi as Mirach Khan was. But the ustad finally had to yield to their pressure and request his favourite disciple to leave the house.[11]

On the fortieth day after the death of Haider Bakhsh a ceremony took place in Agra, where all his disciples and relatives gathered to appoint a new successor. As was the custom, the students played first. When Mirach Khan completed his recital, everyone was so impressed that no one, including Badal Khan (the nephew of Haider Bakhsh), had the courage to play after him. Naturally, Mirach Khan did not come forward to offer Badal Khan *nazarana*, and said: "Unless he can show the work of my master, how can I acknowledge him as his immediate successor?"

At the request of Badal Khan the ceremony was postponed for a year, during which Badal Khan practised so hard that when it took place again he was able to convince the senior musicians that he was the true successor of his master. "Even Mirach Khan offered him *nazarana*, recognizing him as the *khalifa*."[12] Mirach Khan, however, remained the most celebrated performer of this tradition and was even more well-known than his teacher. Sarangi players, amongst themselves and to their students, would cite him as the best example of a musician who was totally absorbed by his practice. "His fingers were always bent, day and night, as if he were playing", remembers an old sarangi player.[13] Mirach Khan died in Tonk (probably around the end of the 19th century), shortly after a performance with the singers, Aliya-Fattuh.

BADAL KHAN—Although Khalifa Badal Khan was one of the famous musical personalities of the past and, indisputably, a very good teacher, his greatness as

a sarangi player is controversial.[14][105] Amongst his many students of vocal music, Girija Shankar Chakravarty was the most prominent.

Born in the 1830's, Badal Khan started learning *dhrupad* and *khayal* from his father(?), Miyan Change Khan. After his father's death he became a disciple of his uncle Haider Bakhsh from whom he learnt the sarangi. It is said that during the Mutiny (1857), both uncle and nephew were arrested and sentenced to death. Through the intercession of an influential person, they were saved.[15] Soon thereafter they settled in Agra, where Badal Khan fell under the spell of the Agra *gharana*. In the early 1900's, he moved to Calcutta where he "spent the latter part of his life . . . but he stopped playing the instrument after the death of his son."[16] Badal Khan was a court musician in Champanagar and died in the late 1930's, over a hundred years old. He was not only a versatile musician, but a good wrestler and sword fighter as well.

Among the other known disciples of Haider Bakhsh, Bunda Khan attained fame in Rampur. He was said to have such great control over his right hand that he was able to play both the *sthayi* and *antara* in a single bow stroke.[17]

BUNIAD HUSSAIN KHAN—There was another reputed artist of Rampur, Buniad Hussain, one of the few sarangi players whose name is found in literature. His father, Ali Bakhsh, was a renowned *hori* and *dhrupad* singer from Lahore, "whose fame was not only confined to northern India but also reached as far as Bengal where many of his pupils are still alive. He was a musician in the *durbar* of Rampur for 40 years during the time of His Highness Nawab Kalbe Ali Khan."[18]

After the death of his father, Buniad Hussain Khan began learning the sarangi and received further training from Amir Khan, father of the great *binkar*, Wazir Khan, and from the famous *rabab* and *sursringar* player, Bahadur Hussain Khan.

> Buniad Hussain rose to be one of the best *sarangee* players of India. He was a musician in the Rampur *durbar* for 45 years during the time of His Highness Nawab Mustak Ali Khan and for some time to his heir, His Highness Nawab Hamid Ali Khan, the present chief who received lessons in vocal music from him prior to his being a pupil of Woozir Khan.[19]

Buniad Hussain died in the beginning of the 20th century and was succeeded by his son, Mehdi Hussain Khan (born in 1883), who was a knowledgeable musician and a competent teacher. But he never attained much fame as a sarangi player. Besides learning from his father he received training from Nawab Sadat Ali Khan and also from Wazir Khan. H. K. Roy Chowdhury (1929) writes about him:

> At present he is under the service of Kumar Arun Chandra Singha of Paikpara, Calcutta. Sudhindra Chandra Chatterjee . . . Sir Chandra Nath Bose of Calcutta, and Girija Sankar Chakraborty of Calcutta are the most noteworthy of the pupils who have received lessons in vocal music from Mehdi Hussein. He is, indeed, a learned vocalist of Hindu music, having in stock not less than 200 *horis*, 200 *dhrupads* in all the three *banis* that are current, 1200 *kheyals*, 150 *toppas*, 100 *thumris* and numerous *dadra*, *gazal* and other types of songs. He is said to be possessed of such musical treasures as very few people have the fortune of knowing.[20]

ALLADIYA KHAN—"Although the art of sarangi playing began with Haider Bakhsh and the tradition was continued by Mirach Khan, Bunda Khan and Badal Khan, the credit for further developing this art should go to Alladiya Khan Birtuwala. He and his ustad, Maula Bakhsh Sage Sakrewala, were the real authorities of sarangi", explained a musician who has a deep understanding of the subject.[21] Little is known, unfortunately, about these great masters, except that Maula Bakhsh was patronized by the ruler of Mangrole State (Haryana), and that he was a very amiable person who treated his pupils like his children. For reasons unknown, he refused to teach Bundu Khan, who tried hard to persuade him, but to no avail.

Like his guru, Alladiya Khan from Jind(?) trained a vast number of sarangi players who disseminated his art throughout the country. Besides his sons, Abdul Aziz Khan and Habib Khan, mention should be made of Khadim Hussain Khan, Asharaf Khan, Faiyaz Khan, Fattuh Khan and Amir Bakhsh. Alladiya Khan also taught a number of women singers, amongst whom were the reputed sisters from Delhi, Chamia and Putli, and Idanbai Suratwali. Since he understood the weaker sides of sarangi players, he trained Idanbai in such a way that no artist was able to defeat her. Most of them were, in fact, afraid to play with her!

ABDUL AZIZ KHAN—Few people realize that Abdul Aziz Khan was a well-known sarangi player before he obtained fame as a *binkar*. According to D. C. Vedi, he was one of the greatest soloists at the beginning of this century. "Abdul Aziz had profound knowledge and learned many *khayals* and *dhrupads* from famous musicians. He played with Miyan Jan of Patiala, Bhaskarraoji and many other celebrities. He was a warm, broad-minded and very interesting man, and was liked by all. After I left my post in Patiala, Abdul Aziz Khan was appointed court musician

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there." Before that, he lived in Bombay where, amongst others, he used to play with the sisters Chamia and Putli, who were very rich and influential; and in the service of a wealthy Hindu *seth*.

> But after some time, there was a serious quarrel between Abdul Aziz and Chamia, who was better known as Shamshad Begum. She taunted and insulted him, after which he told his friends (I was also present): 'Now I will stop playing the sarangi; this instrument does not bring me any respect.' Then he put his sarangi in a bag and hung it on a peg. He did so despite the fact that he was a reputed sarangi player, both as a soloist and an accompanist, and he earned enough money. In no time, however, Abdul Aziz Khan became a leading *vichitra vina* player.

This was in 1920, after he had taken lessons from the renowned *binkar*, Jamaluddin Khan of Jaipur, and after he had practised the instrument for less than two years. "He gave his first performance at the annual music conference of the Gandharva Mahavidyalaya, where he played *raga* Puria. It was highly praised. In the art of *vichitra vina*-playing, he had no peer." Abdul Aziz Khan died in 1946 having made a number of 78 r.p.m. records, which give ample proof of his mastery.[22]

KHADIM HUSSAIN KHAN—Concerning Khadim Hussain Khan of Gudiani, another well-known disciple of Alladiya Khan Birtuwala, a musician said: "From 1953 to 1957 he used to visit our house daily and would always play his instrument. I have never heard such fabulous sarangi-playing and I have never met a person with such a profound training. Ahmad Jan Thirakwa used to say, "As far as the sarangi is concerned, he is the only person who knows how to play it." Even Bundu Khan and the great vocalist, Alladiya Khan, acknowledged his correct training and technique, and Abdul Aziz Khan would affectionately refer to him as the 'real' son of his father. Whatever he played he had learned from his guru."[23][106]

The last remark is revealing. It invalidates the general claim that the sarangi does (or did) not have its own material. A traditional musician like Khadim Hussain Khan adhered so strictly to the musical grammar of that material, that he could not even appreciate the music of Bundu Khan.

"Sarangi players are not usually recognized by others as being authorities on musical theory, although they themselves claim to be so," writes Daniel M. Neuman. Wim van der Meer also believes that sarangi players "have a small and deficient knowledge of compositions."[24] Apparently, the idea was conveyed to them by a vocalist. One wonders, however, to what kind of sarangi players they are referring. All the maestros who have been discussed so far had an impressive knowledge of the traditional repertoire and were, for that reason, acknowledged by others. Even a relatively unknown sarangi player such as Mehdi Hussain Khan possessed "such musical treasures as very few people have the fortune of knowing."

We should also remember that Pt. V. N. Bhatkhande, the most influential musicologist of this century, greatly benefitted from the information given to him by sarangi players such as Nazir Khan and Bundu Khan, musicians who were often more open-minded and generous with their knowledge than orthodox vocalists. To return to Khadim Hussain Khan, he rarely performed in public and always practised during the night. He taught no one, not even his sons, and died in 1959, taking to his grave a wealth of music which can never be unearthed.

ASHIQ HUSSAIN—There were many more well-known sarangi players belonging to this old school with its many branches, such as Game Khan of Sonipat, the brothers Asharaf, Musharaf and Sharif Khan, and Jhire Khan from Panipat.[25] The last great artist of this tradition, however, was Ashiq Hussain Panipatwala, a nephew and disciple of Asharaf Khan. "He was a wonderful sarangi player and very fond of the lighter styles," comments Ram Narayan. "Bade Ghulam Sabir was greatly influenced by this artist. That is what he told me." An old sarangi player recollects: "Ashiq Hussain used to play so sweetly, so much in tune that it was as if his hands were dipped in honey. His sarangi sounded like a buzzing bee."[26]

D. C. Vedi met Ashiq Hussain in 1933 when they performed together in Baroda. At that time, Ashiq Hussain was a court musician in Khairpur.

> I requested him to join me in Bombay when I was working as a music director and composer for the movies. Although he was against service, he accepted the job because he was pleased with my music. Every evening people came to listen to him, and he always compelled me to sing something. He was really a very good soloist and a wise man. I have never met a sarangiya with such a good nature. Ashiq Hussain was a true devotee of God, a very sober man who never drank. He did not even take *pan*. I will never forget him.

BADE GHULAM SABIR—In 1936, Ashiq Hussain was employed by All India Radio, Delhi. It was there that he left a deep impression on another famous sarangi player working for the radio, Bade Ghulam Sabir from Ambala (who was also known as Bade Sabri Khan)[27] [107]. Both artists were influenced by the Patiala *gharana* and both excelled in the lighter genres.

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> Bundu Khan would admit that Ghulam Sabir was superior in *thumri*, and Bundu Khan's *thumri* was no mean stuff as you can tell from his Bhairavi recording. Ghulam Sabir was an extraordinary man. On Sundays he would go to the flea-market in Jama Masjid and buy medals and military uniforms. Like a young boy, he was fascinated by these things and he would wear them even while he was playing the sarangi. He was also very fond of Western movies, although he didn't speak a word of English.[28]

Ghulam Sabir was indeed a remarkable man. "He didn't even know the names of all the *ragas* he used to play, and was not at all bothered. Theory meant nothing to him. He began his musical career as a harmonium player, but when he was told that there was no longer any place for the harmonium,he switched over to the sarangi. Within a few months he started performing," narrates Ram Narayan, who became a close friend after he began working at All India Radio (Delhi) in 1947.

Although Ram Narayan is often critical, and sometimes even cynical when speaking of sarangi players, he opens up and smiles when Ghulam Sabir becomes the subject of conversation.

> He was really a fantastic sarangi player. Both his left- and right-hand techniques were very polished. He had an incredible way of handling the instrument, and one could hardly ever notice when he changed from one string to another. Everything went so smoothly, it sounded so clean, so much in tune.
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> Ghulam Sabir excelled everybody in accompaniment.[29] I never saw a sarangi player like him. He moved like a shadow. But he was temperamental. He chose whom he wanted to play with, and if he did not feel like accompanying a particular singer, he would simply refuse. He also did not like to attend music conferences and many times I asked him why. 'I don't like to sit with vocalists singing for two hours, repeating the same thing over and over again,' was his straightforward answer.
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> In 1957 he was invited to participate in Brij Narayan's festival here in Bombay. He was supposed to play for eight days, each day with one or two singers, but he only accompanied Ghulam Ali Khan and Chand Khan, and also played for Shambu Maharaj. For at least 15 minutes he was only playing *naghma,* making a few variations, while Maharajji was standing there, signalling to him to continue. The audience was spellbound, it sounded so beautiful.

Ghulam Sabir was by temperament a retiring person who did not like to elbow his way to the top. For this reason he remained in the background, far away from the commercial world. He and Ram Narayan used to spend a lot of time together in the radio station, always talking about music, the sarangi, or playing for one another. Ghulam Sabir was extremely fond of *thumri,* always playing *ragas* such as Pahadi, Pilu, Bhairavi, Desh and Kamod. "His last concert was with Ghulam Ali Khan in 1960. He was already very sick and went to Lahore after that, where he died in 1962. I miss him very much," are the last but significant words Ram Narayan says about him.

SHAKUR KHAN (1916-1975)—He was undoubtedly an excellent sarangi player, a good singer and a sincere man of deep knowledge. He was a recipient of the

Sangeet Natak Akademi award for Hindustani instrumental music in 1966, and was also honoured with the prestigious Padma Shri. As a soloist, however, he rarely left his audiences spellbound, and hardly ever performed outside the premises of All India Radio. Listening to his sarangi-playing, I always felt that his style was perhaps too complicated, too intellectual to appeal to the world at large. Nevertheless, there are now only a few sarangi players of the calibre of Shakur Khan.

5.3 *Bundu Khan and the Delhi gharana*

We have seen how artists belonging to the Panipat-Sonipat school contributed much to the general development of sarangi-playing in the 19th century. They and their colleagues from Kirana were acknowledged as leading authorities in the field, while sarangi players from Banaras earned respect for their mastery over *thumri* and *tappa*. With a few exceptions, these musicians were mainly known as accompanists and teachers, whereas Mamman Khan and particularly Bundu Khan also made history as soloists. Although the Delhi *gharana* of Mamman Khan (as it is usually referred to) seems to be an offshoot of a vocal *gharana,* and contains a relatively small number of sarangi players, the latter virtually dominated the sarangi scene for about three-quarters of a century.

According to the late Chand Khan, his grandfather Abdul Gani Khan was the son of a singer, Mohammad Bakhsh Khan, who was a court musician in Ballabgarh. After the Mutiny in Delhi (1857), several musicians (including Shadi Khan and Murad Khan) fled to Ballabgarh, expecting to find refuge with the family of Mohammad Bakhsh. They were, however, not treated with full respect since they were associated with sarangi players. Abdul Gani Khan revolted against this attitude, because amongst the musicians who had arrived was his father-in-law, Ghulam Hussain Khan (a noted sarangi player). The latter was related to the family of the great Miyan Achpal

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Khan who was the teacher of Tanras Khan and Bahadur Shah Zafar, the last Mughal Emperor. Abdul Gani felt that great injustice was being done to the sarangi and told his elders: "If you despise the sarangi and other instruments because they are used to accompany courtesans, why don't you look down on singing as well? After all, these instruments only accompany the women, whilst they themselves sing. I have decided that I shall play the sarangi until it acquires the status which it truly deserves." Abdul Gani Khan was disinherited and expelled from Ballabgarh. He went to Delhi where he became known as Sangi (Sarangi) Khan, and was recognized as one of the foremost sarangi players of his time.[30]

Sangi Khan had four sons: Mamman, Samman, Sugda and Kallu Khan. Three of them received a thorough training in sarangi and became successful artists.[31] But it was Mamman Khan (d. 1940) who inherited the spirit of his father and paved the way for the sarangi to be accepted as a solo instrument. [108] He was perhaps the first artist to play *khayal* or *gayaki ang* on the sarangi, and is also credited with the invention of the *sursagar,* a large sarangi with an additional number of steel strings, which are used as *chikari.* Mohammad Ali, the grandson of Kallu Khan, is the last surviving artist to play on this interesting blend of a bowed and plucked instrument.

In 1918 (?), according to D. C. Vedi, through the influence of Mahant Gajjar Singh (a fabulous *esraj* player who was the teacher of Maharaja Bhupender Singh), Mamman Khan was appointed court musician at Patiala, receiving a monthly salary of one hundred rupees. Vedi remembers that Mamman Khan used to accompany Gauharjan and often performed in Calcutta, where this famous singer lived. It seems that Mamman Khan was influenced by Ali Bakhsh of Patiala, the famous *sitar* player Imdad Khan, Chajju Khan of Bombay and various other artists.[32]

"Some people", writes vocalist Chand Khan, the son of Mamman Khan, "in a spirit of animosity and rivalry, have referred to the Delhi *gharana* as a sarangi *gharana.* They fail to realize, however, that by so doing they give it an additional status, because the sarangi has a history which dates back much further than that of *khayal gayaki. . .* "[33] He explains that his ancestors were distinguished vocalists and concludes: "Why then should singers from the Delhi *gharana* not have the right to claim that they belong to a *gharana,* simply because a few of them played the sarangi?" According to one of Neuman's informants, however, "Mamman Khan's ancestors five generations back came from Rajasthan, where they were folk musicians playing the folk sarangi, still found in the area. At the time of Mohammad Shah Rangile[?], Mamman Khan's great-grandfather abandoned the folk sarangi and adopted the 'modern' sarangi."[34]

It was Mamman Khan's nephew and son-in-law Bundu Khan, who finally raised the status of the sarangi to a solo instrument. [109] Gifted with an extraordinary imagination and an ability for total absorption in his music, Bundu Khan should be regarded as one of the greatest musicians of this century. However, "to say that Bundu Khan was a great musician is to state the obvious", remarks Rajesh Bahādur. "The sarangi was his instrument, not only literally but metaphorically as well. In his hands it became a many-splendoured 'saurangi'. Sometimes it was the *bin,* sometimes the *shehnai* or the human voice, and sometimes even *Kanhaiya ki bansuri* [Krishna's flute] as he used to call it. He really would have been just as great with any instrument. It just so happened that he was born to the sarangi."[35]

Rajesh Bahadur was a disciple of the maestro and got to know him very well, since Bundu Khan would frequently visit their house in Delhi. "Some of my earliest memories are of him playing the sarangi to a family gathering of parents, grandparents, assorted uncles and aunts, and some chosen outsiders as well. Every now and then someone would pull out a handkerchief to wipe his moist eyes. I knew, of course, instinctively rather than by analysis, that Bundu Khan's music had the power to make grown-ups cry. But I was a wicked little boy and used to insist on asking what was happening. I did not really understand then, but I do now. . ."[36]

Bundu Khan was born around 1880 in Old Delhi. His father, Ali Jan Khan, must have realized quite early that his son had an exceptional passion for the sarangi, because, even as a young child, he would tie a piece of cloth around a lamppost, pretending it was a songstress, and take two sticks, imagining they were a sarangi and a bow, and for hours he would sing, dance and play in the street.[37] Instead of continuing to teach the boy himself, Ali Jan took the wise decision to send him to the house of his father-in-law, Miyan Sangi Khan, where he seems to have received rigorous training from Mamman Khan.[38] With total dedication, Bundu Khan would practise day and night, listen to the music of his four maternal uncles and think of nothing but the sarangi. Later on he used to say that each of his uncles had a different approach to music, and that he had experimented with all their styles. "He also told us that he tried to reproduce whatever music made an impression on him. There was even a time when he tried to imitate the sound of the *ghunghrus*."[39]

Bundu Khan always strove for more knowledge and was ready to learn from anyone. "Once, he said that he wanted to learn a rare *bandish* from Kallan Khan, a sarangi player from Indore, who could not find a suitable bride for his son. Only on condition that Bundu Khan would get his son married, was he willing to part with the much-desired composition. And so it was done."[40] Bundu Khan seems to have learned a lot from Miyan Ahmad Shah, particularly the old *ragamalikas* and other 'chains' (*lariyan*) of *ragas* which were among his favourite pieces of music. Performing *raga* Bahar, for instance, he would often play one variety after another: Bilaval Bahar, Adana Bahar, Shahana Bahar, Gara Bahar, Jaijaiwanti Bahar, Bhairav Bahar, Bageshri Bahar and Suha Bahar.[41]

When Bundu Khan was in his twenties, he was only known amongst a small circle. In Delhi alone he had to compete with veteran players such as his guru, Mamman Khan, Alladiya Khan Birtuwala, Faiyaz Khan, Chunda Azim Bakhsh and Asharaf Khan. It seems that his genius was first recognized when he travelled with a female musician from Delhi to Indore where, every year at the time of *holi*, the Maharaja organized a grand music festival. Since they did not have proper accommodation and Bundu Khan had forever the urge to practise, he decided to sit on the pavement and play there and then with his eyes closed. His ecstatic music began to draw the attention of passers-by and soon hundreds of people gathered around him. Bundu Khan, however, oblivious of their presence, just continued to play. The news that a young, poorly-clad sarangi wizard from Delhi had come to Indore reached the court, and a messenger was sent to fetch him. It is said that upon hearing Bundu Khan, Tukoji Maharaj was so impressed that he immediately appointed him court musician.[42] It marked the beginning of a long and extremely successful career in which he would accompany the greatest singers of his time, imbibing their knowledge.

Bundu Khan writes of himself:

> In the Delhi Conference [of 1911] I played with the famous *alap* singers, the late Miyan Allabande Khan and Zakiruddin Khansahib. In the court of Kolhapur, in front of Shrimant Maharaj Holkar of Indore, I accompanied the famous vocalist Alladiya Khansahib. I also played with the distinguished royal singers from Delhi, Miyan Umrao Khansahib and Miyan Shabbur Khan. Others whom I accompanied were Miyan Bahadur Khansahib, Faiyaz Khansahib, who is employed by the court of Baroda, Baba Nasir Khansahib, the late Abdullah Khansahib, Vilayat Hussain Khansahib; the famous singer of Punjab and Lahore, Ali Bakhsh Khansahib, the late Kale Khansahib, Miyan Jan Khansahib, Karamat Khansahib of Jaipur; the sons of Miyan Rahman Bakhsh, Abdul Majid Khansahib and Abdul Haq Khan; Rajab Ali Khan of Malwa, Altaf Khansahib of Khurja, Bilas Khan, the well-known Kale Nazir Khan of Moradabad, Mustaq Hussain Khansahib, Bashir Khan of the Rampur *darbar*, Hafiz Khansahib, Mohammad Khan, Nasir Khan, Chand Khan, Ramzan Khan, Jimumulah Bakhsh Khansahib of Darbhanga, Mojuddin Khan and Bhaiya Ganpat Raoji of Calcutta, and so many others. In the courts of Indore and Rampur, I played sarangi [in competition] with *bin, sitar* and *rabab*. The Maharaja of Indore always preferred listening to my sarangi in this way.[43].

The *bin* and the *sitar* had made an impact on the music of Azim Bakhsh and Mamman Khan. Bundu Khan's music, particularly his *jhala,* was also influenced by these instruments. In other respects as well, he changed the technique and style of sarangi-playing, and in order to imitate the clear, sharp tone of the plucked instruments, he substituted the first string (*tip*) for a steel wire, and preferred to play solo on a small sarangi with only a few *tarabs*.[44] More important was the fact that a steel string would not disturb the flow of his *tanas,* "which were incredibly skilful and characteristic of his style. He had a name for all of them. Apart from the usual ones, *chut, sapat, gamak* and *gitkari,* he had a host of others... It was in his striving for the perfect *sapat tana* that he recognized and articulated the simple but fundamental principle that the *tana* should not be constructed so that the *pallat* [descending *palta*] is halting or clumsy, but that it should be free-flowing. For example, the *sargam* to him was not:

S R G M P D N Ṡ Ṡ N D P M G R S, but
S R G M P D N Ṡ N D P M G R S Ṇ, or
R G M P D N Ṡ Ṙ Ṡ N D P M G R S, or
Ṇ R G M D N Ṡ Ṙ Ṡ N D P M G R S, or even
P D N Ṡ Ṙ Ġ Ṙ Ṡ N D P M G R S N."[45]

He was so obsessed with clarity and simplicity that in *raga* Darbari, for instance, he would introduce a *sapat tana*—$\dot{R}\,\dot{S}\,\underline{\dot{N}}\,P\,M\,R\,S\,\underline{\dot{N}}\,S$—which strictly speaking belongs to Sarang. Accented in the correct way, however, it does not really destroy the character of Darbari but, rather, enhances it.

In Indore, Bundu Khan came into contact with Pandit V. N. Bhatkhande, under whose influence he published a small book (1934) which gives us an insight

into his vast knowledge of compositions, genres and styles. [110, 111] He writes that he intended to publish *Sangit Vivek Darpan* in sixteen volumes, and gives a detailed account of what it would contain.[46] It is extremely unfortunate that this series was never published, perhaps because Bundu Khan was discouraged by the lack of response to his noble intention.[47] Had he completed his work it would today have greatly enhanced our knowledge of traditional music.

Bundu Khan also designed a new musical language and notation. To him the ascending scale of *raga* Malkosh was neither *Sa Ga Ma Dha Ni Ṡa*, nor *GaSa MaGa DhaMa NiDha ṠaNi Ṡa* but *Gas Mag Dham Nad Ṡan Ṡa*. It is obvious that such a notation has great advantages over the orthodox system which reveals next to nothing about note treatment and the way notes are linked to each other.[48]

> He devoted his life so unsparingly and so exclusively to music that he never understood the ways of the world . . . Even when he had fully established himself as a maestro he remained a compulsive player, prepared to lavish his treasures on anyone who would listen. . . And I must add, even those who would not. He had an innocent way of presuming that everyone and everything around him understood what he was playing. On one occasion he arrived some two hours before the appointed time for a small *baithak*. When the session was to begin he was nowhere to be found and frantic search parties went looking for him all over. He was finally located in a hedge of sweet pea in the garden. When asked what he was doing he said: 'It was Bahar, so I was playing for these flowers.'[49]

॥ श्रीः ॥

"संगीत विवेक दर्पण"

का नमूना ।

लेखक और प्रसिद्ध कर्ता–

सरकार दरबार इंदौर हुलकर बहादुरके मुलाजिम

खांसाहेब बुन्देखां सारंगीनवाज़ [देहलवी].

खेमराज श्रीकृष्णदास,

अध्यक्ष–"श्रीवेङ्कटेश्वर" स्टीम्–प्रेस,

बम्बई.

संवत १९९१, शके १८५६. ईसवी सन १९३४.

कीमत ८ आने.

"I relate these stories", continues R. Bahadur, "because Bundu Khan's music cannot be divorced from his personality. The fusion between the two is irrevocable and valid at all times. In his music this innocence and simplicity come through. He was never cynical, never self-conscious and even when he had arrived in the world of music, he had no false sense of dignity. He was prepared to learn from all and equally prepared to give to all. He would as happily play at the *ramlila* as in the grandest of grand conferences... There was something of the elfin about the personality of Bundu Khan. There was always a gentle, tolerant smile on his face which could become impish or devotional. I discovered to my cost, however, that he could be devastating when it came to really important things. I had been visiting him in Suiwala regularly for six months and had been trying to learn Darbari. One day he exploded and rapped his *gaz* [bow] sharply on my knuckles. He said that my *dhaivat* was not *komal* enough and there was nothing I could do about it, because, in his opinion, I had too much false pride, and that, without suffering and poverty in one's heart, one would never be able to find the right *dhaivat,* or for that matter, the right *gandhar.* Ustad Bundu Khan, too, was once scolded by his mentor, Ustad Mamman Khan, who said: 'Your *tana* in Bahar is like the neck of a pig which cannot turn. What is the use of this? You'd better go and sort it out.' Bundu Khan spent the next three years trying to correct this elusive defect... He said the fingers also had to have eyes which would enable them to look back... I asked him, what did your ustad say when you played Bahar for him again. He said, 'H'm... yes.' "[50]

> Occasionally, household chores like buying vegetables were thrust upon him. He specially designed a small sarangi which he would sling over his shoulder, cover with a cloth and then proceed to the market. He had to dispense with the *gaz* on these occasions because it would open him to the ridicule of passers-by. But he could use his fingers without anyone noticing. This opened for him a universe of rhythmic variations in which bowing was superfluous. He could will his sarangi to do anything: *boltanas, taranas, sargam, tirvat, jhala,* and in order to reach perfection, he practised practically all the time.[51]

Fortunately, quite a few recordings of Bundu Khan exist, although it should be remarked that the sound quality is often very poor.[52] They do give us, however, an impression of his versatile genius, of his ability to bring out the very essence of *ragas,* and of his infinite joy in playing. "In his play there is a continuous flow of powerful ideas, there is no groping, there are no pauses, no loose ends. His pot of music keeps spilling over. There was within him a sort of musical pressure which demanded an outlet, and he played as much to release himself as to please the audience. This persistent need was probably the reason why he could not contain himself and in several performances—and much to the chagrin of the organizers—he would start singing and talking hoarsely and unintelligibly..."[53]

In 1948, Bundu Khan was persuaded by his eldest son Umrao Khan, to migrate to Pakistan. "He preferred to stay in India but was easily persuaded, especially when his wife decided to follow the son. He was not happy about it and became a sad man when he finally had to go... My father helped him a lot... After arriving in Lahore, Bundu Khan sent him an extraordinary letter of thanks:

My dear Shivraj Bahadur Sahib,
Thank you so much for the trouble you took to get me here.
Here are some *tanas* in Malkosh. . .
Yours sincerely,
Bundu Khan."[54]

Before he went, Bundu Khan made two commercial 78 r.p.m. records for HMV. They are among the most brilliant pieces of music that have ever been recorded, in spite of the fact that Bundu Khan was already in his late sixties and the fingers of his left hand were badly inflamed. Rajesh Bahadur comments: "The last piece is the most masculine, the most powerful conception of Bhairavi that I have ever come across. In just four-and-a-half minutes, he creates a garden in full bloom."[55]

The move to Pakistan virtually marked the end of Bundu Khan's active musical life, and seven years later, on January 13, 1955, he passed away in Liyaqatabad. His main disciples were the late Abdul Majid Khan, his nephew Nazar Mohammad (who died at a young age in 1950), his two sons, the late Umrao Bundu Khan (who seems to have been more under the influence of his maternal uncles, Chand and Usman Khan) and Buland Iqbal, Mohammad Sagiruddin Khan of Calcutta and various others.

5.4 *Banaras*

Thumri and its related song-types lead us eastwards to Banaras, which, according to Imam (1856), "is a centre where a style of singing, dancing and *bhav-batana* flourishes, a style most favoured by the present generation."[56] Banaras was also an important seat of sarangi-playing in the 19th century. Imam was full of praise for Jatan Kathak, who was a disciple of the revered vocalist and scholar, Babu Ram Sahai of Allahabad, and the regular accompanist of the great woman singer, Bi Rehmanbai.[57] It is not known whether this maestro had any noticeable descendants, but it is obvious that a majority of sarangi players living in Banaras, Lucknow and its surrounding towns (Faizabad, Sultanpur, Jaunpur, Mirzapur etc.) belonged to the Hindu *kathak* community. Like *dharis* or *mirasis*, the *kathak* families were interrelated by marriage. Unlike *mirasis*, however, they were socially respected. As Norvin Hein observes: "Ethnological manuals show that a *kathak* caste, usually dignified with a place among the lower orders of brahmans, is fairly well represented throughout eastern Uttar Pradesh. The traditional caste occupations are dancing (in which they are credited with superior artistry) and serving as teachers, managers, and musical accompanists of dancing-girls. . . The *kathak* remains, artistically as well as socially, superior and apart."[58]

From a social and also from a musical point of view, the Banarsi sarangi players form a more or less isolated group. They are, above all, specialists in the lighter genres, such as *thumri, tappa, kajri* and *chaiti*. The way they handle the instrument is quite different from what we have seen in other places, and the instruments themselves are usually smaller and narrower than the ones we find around Delhi.

SIYAJI MAHARAJ—When musicians talk about sarangi players from Banaras, three names stand out: Siyaji Maharaj, Shambu Nath Maharaj and Gopal Mishra. About the first musician, a music critic of the *Hindustan Standard* wrote: "Apart from instrumental playing, he used to sing numerous varieties of *dhrupad, khayal* and

thumri. The closing period of his life was very tragic. He was incapacitated by a [crippling] disease. But even then he used to play the sarangi in a lying posture. Such was his love for the instrument that, according to his wish, the sarangi he played was placed on his body when he died."[59] Siyaji was the son of a well-known vocalist, Shyamcharan Mishra, and indeed, one of the respected masters of his time. He taught many famous women singers, including Rajeshwari, Vidhyadhari and Kamaleshwari Devi, Kashibai, Badi Motibai, Choti Motibai and last, but not least, Siddheshwari Devi. Siddheshwari said about her teacher:

> No one could possibly get a more generous and affectionate guru. Having no children of his own, he treated me like his own daughter. He taught me all the basic *ragas*, and a large number of *khayals, tappas* and *taranas*. He taught me with all his heart, and I practised my music with intense concentration and devotion.[60]

Siyaji was unchallengeable in *thumri* and *tappa ang*. Musicians say that all sarangi players who listened to his wonderful music, including Mamman Khan and Bundu Khan, "became silent and admitted that no one else could play *tappa* like him."[61]

SHAMBU NATH MISHRA—There was an important family of sarangi players in Banaras who trace their origin to Mirzapur. The most prominent artist of this lineage, Shambu Nath Mishra (the youngest son of Ram Narayan Mishra), was a contemporary of Zohrabai. It is said that he spent the first part of his life in Patna where he became one of the favourite accompanists of this great woman singer. It is also told (but difficult to verify) that he played together with Mamman Khan in Calcutta, and that in Poona there was a musical contest between Mirach Khan and Shambu Nath. When the latter began playing *tappa*, Mirach Khan was unable to follow his complex melodic patterns, and had to accept defeat.[62]

Later in life, Shambu Nath settled in Kabir Choura, the age-old Banarsi colony of musicians and dancers, where he was considered one of the great music masters. Besides being a sarangi player and a vocalist, he was a good poet and played *dholak, bansuri, sitar* and *esraj* as well. He was also known as a wrestler. Such were the qualifications of the musicians of India's past!

Unlike his father, Sarju Prasad Mishra (who died in 1944) stayed mainly in Banaras. Although he was a distinguished artist and a dedicated teacher of many women singers, an old musician told me, "he was not as good a sarangi player as Siyaji."[63] Sarju's third son, Baij Nath Mishra (born in 1915), is also recognized as a knowledgeable master of sarangi and vocal music, but has, in spite of that, remained in the background.

GOPAL MISHRA—Another Banarsi sarangi player, whose name was known all over India, Gopal Mishra (1920-77), was as versatile an accompanist as a soloist. [112] Many stories are told about his eccentric nature. But what matters most is that whenever he played, he was able to touch the people with his profound music, and bring forth the very soul of the sarangi.

Ram Narayan recalls memories of a time when Gopal Mishra and he played together with Onkar Nath Thakur:

> Gopal Mishra was a very good and talented sarangi player and a fine man. He did not have any preconceived ideas about the sarangi and would do

whatever suited him, playing any note with any finger. . . He was a very successful performer and played everywhere with everyone.

He had a remarkable sense of rhythm and was known for playing fast and complex rhythmical patterns with his bow. Once he had to play *naghma* for a mridangist, but when he came on stage, he was intoxicated. My brother, Chatur Lal, and I were present. When Gopal began playing the *naghma* in *dhamar tala,* he led the rhythm with his bow. The drummer was really in trouble and the listeners became upset, saying that Gopal disturbed the performance. The contrary was true; what he did was fabulous. He played a perfect and powerful *naghma,* and my brother understood what he was trying to demonstrate. . . Gopal Mishra used to put singers and *tabla* players in their place. That was wonderful.

He was indeed one of the last sarangi virtuosos who could command respect for the instrument at a time when it was already doomed. His development of *raga* was individualistic and emphasized startling and unusual note combinations. He was a master of the rhythmical use of the bow (*détaché* bowing) and known for his *sargam tanas* and *tihais.* Whereas other instrumentalists of much less stature acquired national and international fame, Gopal Mishra remained a musicians' musician. Not a single record album of this maestro has been brought out, but the few recordings which survive demonstrate his mastery.

The musical ancestors of Gopal Mishra came from Balrampur State. All we know is that his great-great-grandfather, Ram Bakhshji, was the first to settle in

Banaras. His two sons, Shitalji and Ganeshji (who still played on a small sarangi and died at the beginning of this century) were two of the most prominent sarangi players of Banaras. It is said that Shitalji Mishra once played in the house of Gauharjan in Calcutta, after which Mamman Khan praised his splendid performance, recognizing him as one of the great maestros of the time.[64] Shitalji remained in Calcutta, where his son Gauri Shankar Mishra taught the well-known songstress, Indubala.

Ganeshji's son, Sur Sahai Mishra, was a contemporary of Siyaji Maharaj. Like the latter, he was a distinguished sarangi player and a good singer who had many disciples. Both his sons, Hanuman Prasad and Gopal Mishra, were first trained by him. Later they were sent to the well-known scholar-musician, Bade Ramdas Mishra, to complete their musical education. For many years, Gopal Mishra (together with the *tabla* player Anoki Lal) was the favourite accompanist of Onkar Nath Thakur. It was partly under the influence of this magical singer that his music developed into a fascinating sequence of emotional colours, which was also characteristic of the personality of this complex, but sensitive man.

In Kabir Choura, today, lives his elder brother, Hanuman Prasad Mishra (born in 1914), one of the last grand old men of the Banarsi sarangi. [113] He is a gentle and peaceful man who, unlike his illustrious brother, rarely made headlines, but has earned respect. A man with a sound musical knowledge who accompanied many well-known singers, he preferred to cultivate his art in Banaras.

5.5 *An important musical family from Jhajjar*

There were many other sarangi players, or whole families of sarangi players, who made important contributions to the advancement of the art. The lineage (*khandan*) from Jhajjar, a small town close to Delhi, deserves special attention. Over a period of at least two centuries, it produced a large number of accomplished accompanists who were known all over Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Maharashtra. Azim Bakhsh and Abdul Majid Khan were doubtless the most noteworthy artists, but when one takes a close look at the family tree, one becomes aware of how many more distinguished sarangi players this family generated.

The first prominent musician of this *khandan,* Ramzan Khan, earned a name as a sarangi player and a vocalist. He was the son of Karim Bakhsh, and the grandson of Manguwa Khan, who must have lived around the turn of the 19th century. But nobody in the family today remembers anything about him, except that he was a sarangi player who lived in Jhajjar.

Ramzan Khan lived until 1897 and heads the first large branch of the tree. (The other two branches descend from his brother Jivana Khan and their paternal uncle, Piran Khan). He learned mainly from Lal Khan, a musician of Panipat, who was his wife's brother. His eldest son, Masit Khan, was also a good sarangi player; but his youngest son, Haider Khan, remained unknown. Their offspring consisted mainly of daughters and the lineage of Ramzan Khan discontinued.

AZIM BAKHSH—The next prominent musician, Azim Bakhsh (who died sometime between 1902 and 1908) was definitely one of the foremost sarangi players of the time. He was the eldest son of Jivana Khan (who was still playing on a small sarangi, a so-called *tota*) but received most of his training from Ramzan Khan. Anjanibai Malpekar recalls:

> You can say that Azim Khan Bakhsh was almost like my right hand! He only had to tune the strings and start bowing, and the *svaras* would flow from the singer's mouth. Truly, I have never seen nor heard a sarangiya with such a magical touch.[65]

Although Azim Bakhsh spent most of his life in Indore, he was also known in Delhi and Bombay, where he played with the legendary Bablibai of Goa and many other famous vocalists.

> Ramzan Khan and Azim Bakhsh were the first of our ancestors who settled in Bombay. Before that, they walked from Indore to Delhi, stopping in each place along the way to earn enough money to continue their travels.[66]

It is said that, as a young man, he practised in a stable for many years. "Although the *baijis* would usually feed their musicians, they could not provide them with living quarters. He would tie up his long hair with a string, and attach the end of the string to a beam so as to stay awake."[67] Throughout his life he continued this severe practice.

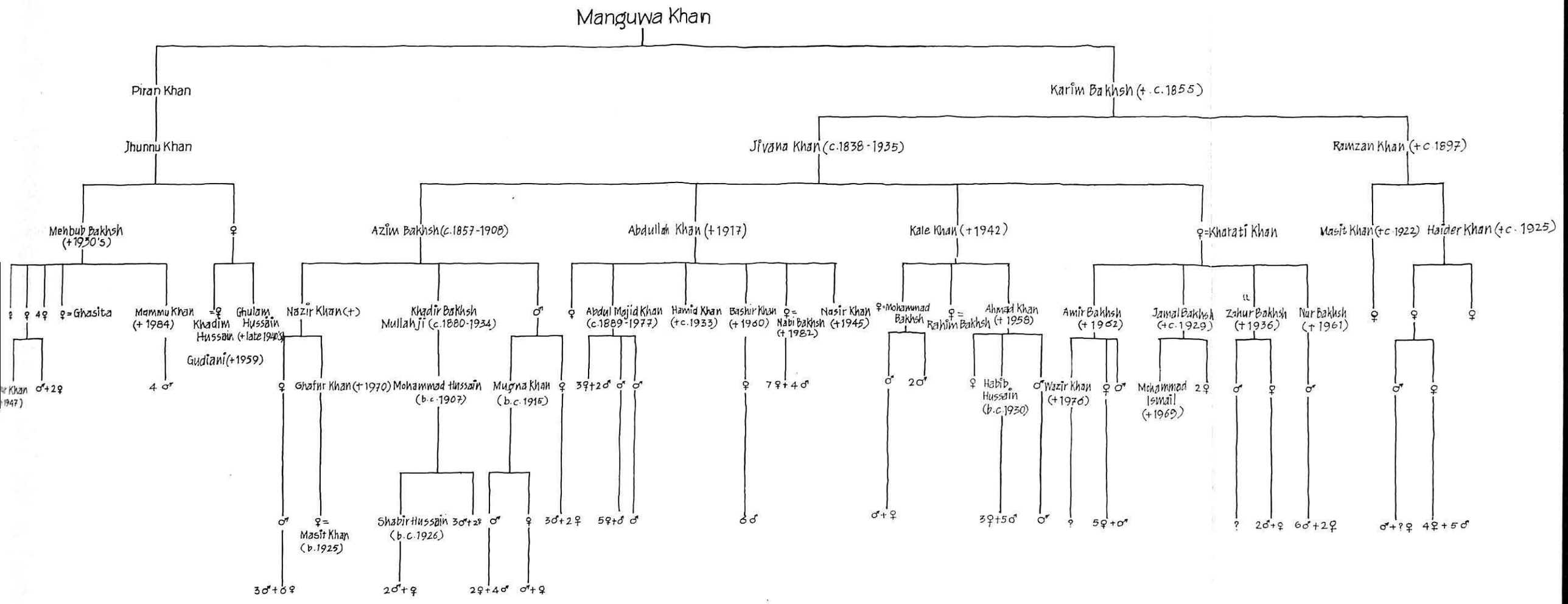
> With each meal he consumed a quarter of a kilo of pure *ghee*. Then he would smoke his *hookah* and around ten p.m. he began to practise, mainly *paltas* at a very slow pace. He continued until very early in the morning, and the people who came to listen to him could not tear themselves away from the beautiful music until he laid down his bow.[68]

Azim Bakhsh was a very tall man who played on a huge sarangi. The first string (tuned to the highest pitch) was as thick as the lowest string (*kharaj*) of a common sarangi. "Imagine what strength he must have had. Nobody after him was able to handle his instrument. Like Haider Bakhsh Firishtiwala, he was famous for playing *jor ang* and could work up to an incredible speed with his bowing hand. . . In *jor* there is *gamak*, but there are no *tanas*. It came from the *vina* and was the original style of sarangi-playing. Later, when sarangiyas began to accompany *khayal* singers, they specialized in *gayaki ang*. This was a natural development, since it was required of them," tells his grandson Mohammad Hussain Khan.[69]

KHADIR BAKHSH—As the teacher of most of the heirs, Azim Bakhsh occupies the prime position in this *khandan*. His second son, Khadir Bakhsh 'Mulahji' (c. 1880-1934), received the most thorough kind of training.[114] Sometimes he had to suffer for it. "When he did not play exactly what his father had taught him, Azim Bakhsh would give him a severe beating, as he was a perfectionist and a strict disciplinarian."[70]

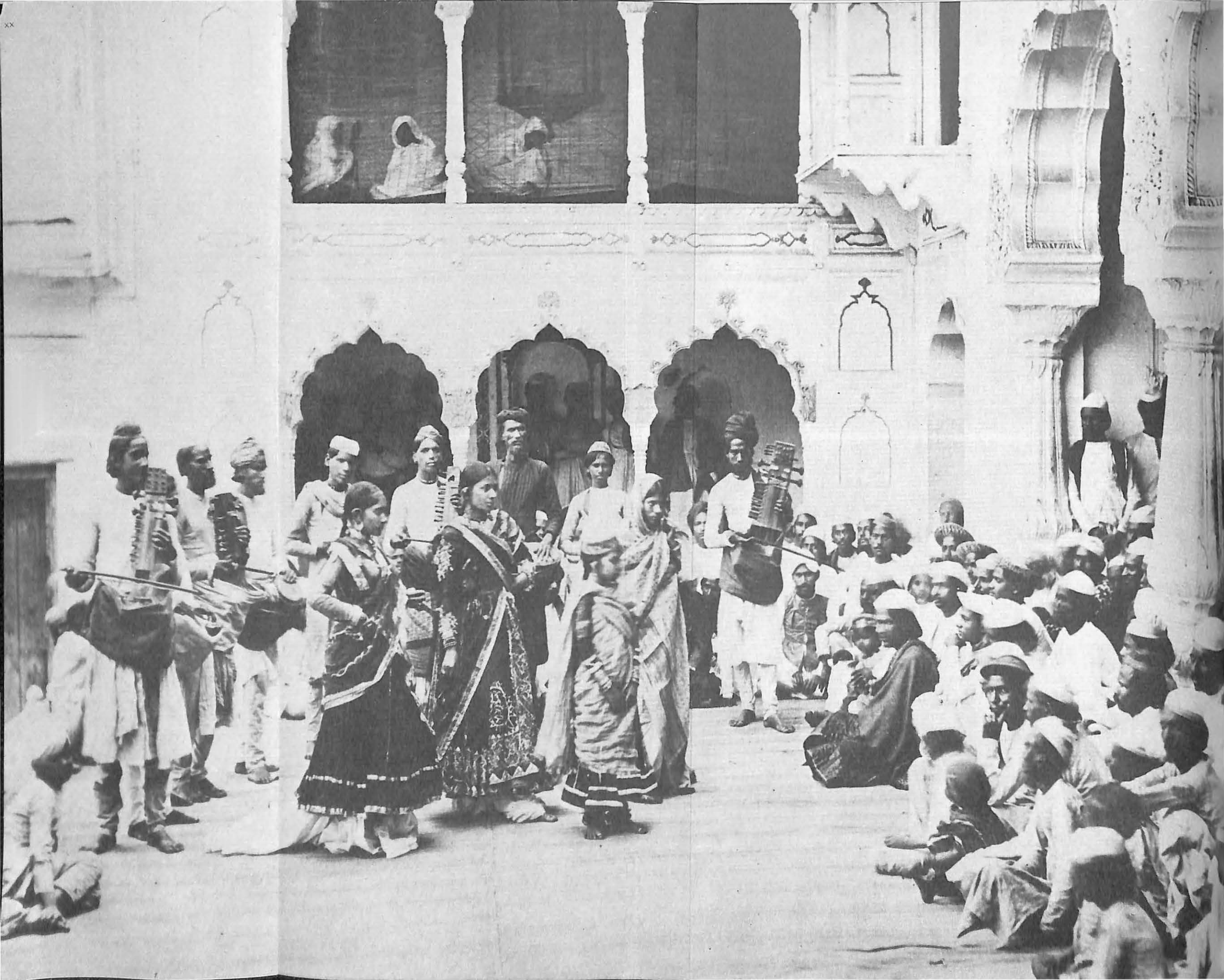
Khadir Bakhsh became known all over Maharashtra as the accompanist of Bal Gandharva (1888-1967), the idol of the Marathi stage whose popularity as an actor and singer was unparalleled.

> The velvet curtain, gold embroidered carpets, gorgeous costumes, ornaments and the lavish sets designed by Baburao Painter, all combined to create an atmosphere of luxury. Keshavrao Kamble and Kadar Bakhsh provided the accompaniment [on] the organ and sarangi, while Khan Ahmedjan Thirakawa played on the *tabla*. Whether it was the onslaught of musical excellence with which Vinayakrao Patwardhan and Krishna Master treated the audience, or whether it was Bal Gandharva, his



FAMILY TREE OF JHAJJAR KHANDAN

= married to
+=died in
♀=Female
♂=Male



golden voice beautifully blended with the accompanying instruments—the result was a musical ecstasy never experienced before. Alladiya Khan Saheb used to say that whenever he felt like music, he would find his way to Bal Gandharva's plays. No wonder the music-loving, common man—be he Marathi, Gujarati or South Indian, was completely hypnotised by the golden voice.[71]

Bal Gandharva's first ustad, Mehbub Bakhsh, also belonged to the Jhajjar *khandan*.[116] It was the great Bhaskarrao Bakhle, however, whose "essential contribution lay in developing fully Bal Gandharva's uncommonly sweet voice to serve the needs of the stage and in bringing classical music within the easy grasp of the ordinary theatregoer."[72]

For years, Khadir Bakhsh travelled with the Gandharva Natak Company. From 1928 onwards, he and the legendary *tabla* player, Ahmad Jan Thirakwa, kept audiences spellbound for hours with their *jugalbandis*. "He played popular stage songs which the people knew. On the basis of these songs he would develop the *ragas* . . . Old people who heard him play so many years ago, remember him even now."[73]

MOHAMMAD HUSSAIN KHAN—"In every respect, Khadir Bakhsh was a sober person, and a very pious man. This is why he was known as Mulahji. Some of his views I have inherited," says his son who presently is the senior-most artist of the Jhajjar *khandan*.[74][115]

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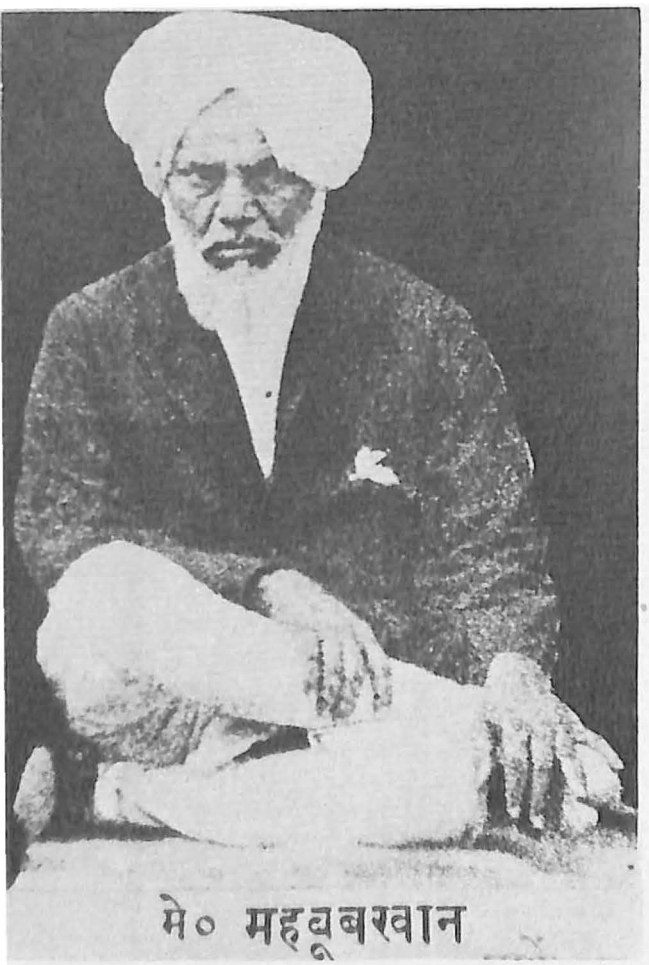
Mohammad Hussain Khan of Poona (born c. 1907) is indeed one of the most amiable and open-minded sarangi players I have encountered. A quiet man who has followed in the footsteps of his father, he radiates authority. When I met him recently in the 'Arun Music Class', where he teaches his vocal students, he disclosed without pride that he had played with many famous vocalists of his generation, and that he became a disciple of the reputed ustad, Aman Ali Khan.

After the death of his father in 1934, Mohammad Hussain joined the Gandharva Natak Company, but six years later he decided to leave the world of theatre and founded his own music school. Since then he has been a dedicated teacher, one of the most respected musical personalities of Poona. He has written two books on the subject and also created two *ragas*. I asked him why he finally gave up the sarangi:

> The time and effort it takes to learn this instrument are out of proportion to what one gets in return. What a singer can learn in three years, takes a sarangi player at least twelve years. In spite of that, all a sarangi player can achieve is to accompany singers. No matter how much a sarangiya has practiced, a vocalist can always defeat him. *Sitar* and *sarod* are independent instruments and the musicians who play these don't have that problem.
>
> This is why I became a singer. It is a much more rewarding profession. Had I continued to play only sarangi, I would have been obliged to accept



any job with any singer. If he so desired, even a mediocre vocalist could put me down on stage. There is really no respect for this instrument, and even famous sarangi players have not been able to change this.

What Mohammad Hussain expresses is felt by all sarangi players to whom I have spoken. For them the instrument has no scope, no future. Why then should they teach their sons an art which leads to poverty?

KALE KHAN—Another prominent artist was Kale Khan, who learned the art from his eldest brother Azim Bakhsh, and passed it on to the next generation. Little is known about him except that he was a leading sarangi player in Malwa and Rajasthan, where he spent the major part of his life, and where many contemporary sarangi players came under his influence. He died in Jaipur in 1942.

Kale Khan taught many women singers and sarangi players, but his most outstanding disciples were his nephews, Abdul Majid Khan and Amir Bakhsh.[117] The latter also received some training from Alladiya Khan Birtuwala, and was staff artist at All India Radio (Bombay) until his death in 1962, when he was over eighty years old. His nephew, Mohammad Ismail Khan, also an accomplished sarangi player, was employed by AIR as well.

The family tree reveals many other sarangi players, who for reasons of space (and stature) will not be discussed. Mention should be made, however, of Mugna Khan, who also studied under Kale Khan and was employed (along with Ghafur Khan) by the Gandharva Natak Company in 1940. He is one of the ustads of Abdul Latif Khan of Bhopal, today the leading sarangi player of Madhya Pradesh.

Mugna Khan is one of the four surviving players of this old family. The others are Mohammad Hussain Khan, his son Shabir Khan, and Habib Khan. Mohammad Hussain is almost eighty years old and stopped playing sarangi several years ago. He belongs to that generation of sarangi players, born around the turn of the century, when hardly anyone questioned the place of sarangi in classical Hindustani music. In fact, all but one of the descendants of the Jhajjar *khandan* took up the profession of sarangi-playing at that time. Thereafter, a dramatic change took place. A large majority of the offspring began to choose other professions, and the last generation of sarangi players was born between 1925 and 1930. Not a single person of the present generation has received training in sarangi.

In this regard, the Jhajjar *khandan* is hardly an exception to the rule; rather, it represents a general trend in the decline of the sarangi. Within a few decades, the innumerable sarangi players who still inhabited northern Indian cities, towns and even villages at the beginning of the 20th century, were drastically reduced to a handful. No instrument and no community of musicians were hit so badly by the catastrophic changes that overtook Indian music during this century.

5.6 *Portrait of Abdul Majid Khan*

"Many sarangi players agitate vocalists, but Majid Khan was not a man of that type," says D. C. Vedi. "He never disturbed any singer and always tried to give support to them. He was one of the very, very good sarangi players, a man with a cool and balanced nature. In Bombay there was no better sarangi player than Majid Khan."

When I met Khansahib during my very first visit to India, my knowledge of Indian music was limited to what I had heard on current LP's. As a student and admirer of Ram Narayan, I was naturally influenced by his views. Yet, this old (he was then eighty-two) and dedicated musician was to make a deep and everlasting impression on me. Looking back, there is little doubt that he was one of the most sincere musicians I ever met.

Abdul Majid Khan was a humble and quiet man, who led a simple life. He did not like to talk much, preferring to teach instead. To him, the essence of music was in the music itself: everything else was redundant. Although he had lost a leg, he continued to play the sarangi every day. He would never teach without his instrument, nor would he find excuses for himself saying he was not in a mood to play. Khansahib was a passionately optimistic man, whose only resentment was that his strength continued to decrease with age. Sometimes he would complain: "If God would grant me my youth and vigour, I could show the world how to play the sarangi . . ."

For several months I visited him daily and the beautiful music he taught me is engraved upon my memory. Particularly, the old-style *jor* in *raga* Bhimpalasi, which Ustadji learned from Bundu Khan, will always remain one of my favourite pieces of music: probably because it was conveyed with so much love, and also because it is a traditional masterpiece, which reveals the most straightforward and systematic way of developing a *raga*. Like his gurus, Bundu Khan and Alladiya Khan, Ustadji was a man who believed that the core of the music can only be reached through simplicity and total dedication.

Abdul Majid Khan was born in 1888/89, the eldest son of Abdullah Khan. Father and son did not get along very well, so Majid Khan was trained by his uncle, Kale Khan. At the age of seventeen he began performing. During the early days of his career in Indore, Majid Khan's life was pleasant but uneventful. Like most sarangi players, he spent his time accompanying songstresses and enjoying himself.

A major change took place when Bundu Khan visited Indore. Within a few days he became the talk of the town, and it was then that Majid Khan faced the truth, realizing he had been whiling away his time, leading a leisurely existence instead of a life dedicated to music. Recognizing the greatness of Bundu Khan, he decided to become his follower and disciple, much against the wishes of his elders. Over the years, a close friendship evolved between the two sarangi players and whenever there was an opportunity they would be in each other's company.[118]

> Majid Khan was a busy man and always in demand, but his younger brother, Bashir Khan, could spend much more time with Bundu Khan. He was a real disciple of Khansahib, and even in some ways a better sarangi player than Majid Khan. He was always practising, could play any sarangi, and had a sweet and melodious voice as well. Unfortunately, at the peak of his abilities, he became slightly deranged and was sent back to Jhajjar.[75]

The impact of Bundu Khan's music on Abdul Majid Khan can be heard on a 78 r.p.m. record from 1927/28, on which he plays *ragas* Bhimpalasi and Suha Sughrai.[76]

In 1920, Majid Khan decided to settle in Bombay. He arrived on the first of August, the day Lokamanya Tilak died. "As was the custom, he was invited by the local musicians for lunch, after which a music session took place. This was in the compound near the Congress House, the area where most of the songstresses lived. Amongst those present was Seth Gopaldas, an influential and affluent individual, who invited him to meet his paramour, the great vocalist Kesarbai Kerkar. From that day onwards, Kesarbai and Majid Khan always performed together. The voice of Kesarbai and the voice of his sarangi were one."[77] They became the most famous musical pair of this century. On all the recordings of this grand lady, Majid Khan's soft sarangi reproduces the wonderful musical images like an echo.[78] There is always an uninterrupted flow of powerful music, and when the voice halts, the sarangi continues.

Through his long association with Kesarbai, Majid Khan became known as one of the most prominent and reliable sarangi players in Bombay. All the great singers of the time preferred his accompaniment. These included: Abdul Karim Khan (Kirana); Alladiya Khan, Manjhi Khan, Burji Khan, Shankarrao Sarnaik and Mallikarjun Mansur (Atrauli); Abdullah Khan, Faiyaz Khan, Khadim Hussain Khan, Vilayat Hussain Khan, Latafat Hussain Khan, S. N. Ratanjankar and Ram Marathe (Agra); Bhaskarrao Bakhle and his disciples, Master Krishnarao, Dilip Chandra Vedi and Bhai Lal; Shabbu Khan, Baba Nasir, Ramzan Khan and Chand Khan (Delhi); Ramkrishnabua Vaze, Onkar Nath Thakur, D. V. Paluskar, Vinayakrao Patwardhan, Narayanrao Vyas, Ram Manohar Joshi, Manohar Barve and B. R. Deodhar (Gwalior); Rajab Ali Khan, Ganpatrao Devaskar and Amanat Khan (Devas); Mustaq Hussain Khan and Nissar Hussain Khan (Sahasvan); Karamatullah Khan (Jaipur); Rahimuddin Khan Dagar, Pyara Sahib (Calcutta); Master Vasant Amrut (Surat); Mubarak Ali Khan (Sind); Ashiq Ali Khan, Umid Ali Khan and Bade Ghulam Ali Khan (Patiala); Mubarak Ali Khan and Amanat Ali Khan (Bhindibazar).

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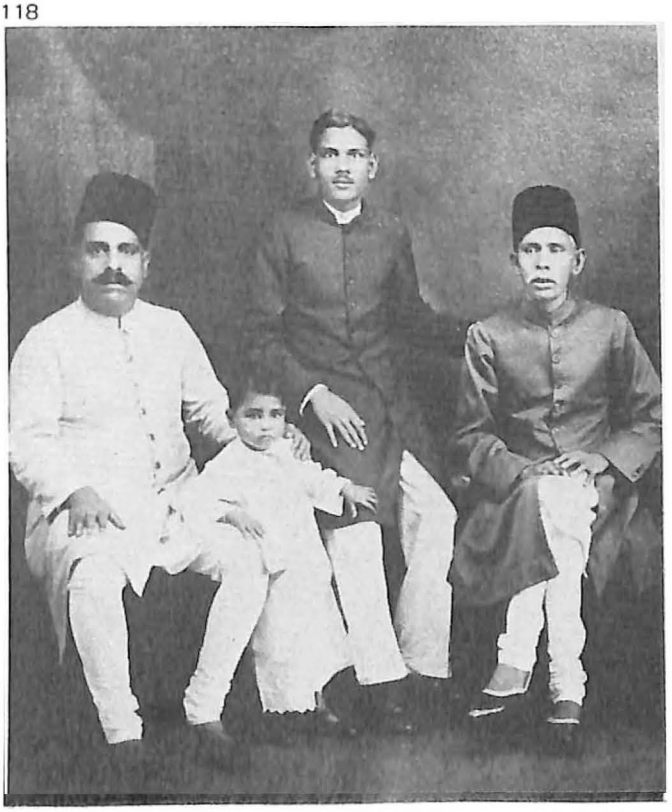
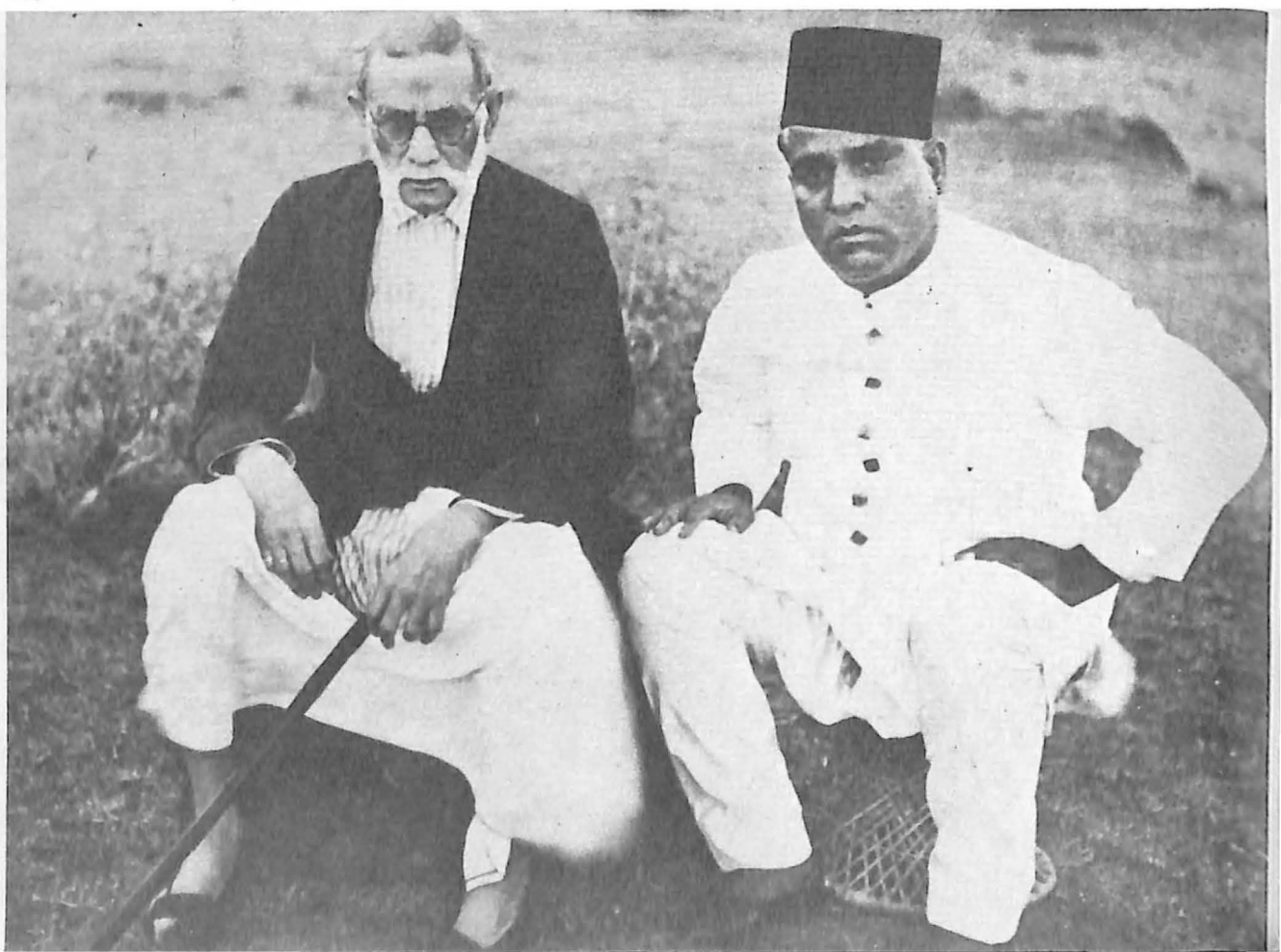


Besides Kesarbai Kerkar, mention should be made of such famous women singers as Gauharjan and Jaddanbai (Calcutta); Rajeshwari, Kamaleshwari, Vidhyadhari, Badi Motibai, Choti Motibai, Rasulanbai, Chandharbai and Siddheshwari Devi (Banaras); Mogubai Kurdikar (Atrauli); Roshanara Begum, Hirabai Barodekar and Gangubai Hangal (Kirana); Begum Akhtar (Faizabad); Sundarabai (Poona); Badi Gauhar (Jaipur); Badi Anjanibai (Malpekar) and Choti Anjanibai (Kalgutkar). When Kesarbai visited Madras, Abdul Majid Khan even accompanied M. S. Subbulakshmi.

It is known that Abdul Karim Khan rarely allowed anyone to play the sarangi with him, and instead preferred the harmonium accompaniment of Shankar-rao Kapileshwari. Once, however, when Khansahib was going to sing for All India Radio and his accompanist failed to arrive on time, Majid Khan was requested to replace him. Abdul Karim Khan was so pleased with his sarangi that henceforth he called on Majid Khan.

Faiyaz Khan was also enamoured of Majid Khan's playing, and said he was the only accompanist who could make people applaud. According to Jaddanbai, no sarangi player ever accompanied her so successfully as Abdul Majid Khan. Onkar Nath Thakur used to call him his right hand, and often said to him: "Whenever I sing, your image is always present." On Onkar Nath's early records (released in 1935 and 1950), Majid Khan reveals yet another aspect of accompaniment.[79] Rather than following the voice like a shadow, his sarangi responds to the challenges of the singer. There is a meaningful dialogue which sometimes evolves into an



inspiring controversy, but never does his sarangi overshadow the voice. As a master accompanist, Majid Khan understood that if a sarangi player overpowers a singer, the harmony is destroyed, the joy is gone, and what remains is the noise of clashing egos . . .

By playing with practically all the great vocalists, Abdul Majid Khan was always exposed to the best music. Yet it was the music of Kesarbai which enchanted him most. Indeed, nothing was more impressive and profound, and he decided to become a disciple of her guru, the great Alladiya Khan.[119] Majid Khan was already fifty years old at that time and had behind him a long and successful musical career. Despite this, he was dissatisfied and felt he had to learn more. Once again, like an unassuming student, he sat at the feet of his master.

> He left the house around six or seven in the morning and returned late, never before midnight. He was so engrossed in the music that he spent each moment of the day at Alladiya Khan's side. This went on from 1938 to 1942. He had never sung before and had a very hoarse voice, but after four years of training he was able to give a vocal recital on All India Radio. Kesarbai would tease him, and had a fit of laughter when she first heard him sing. She was deeply impressed, however, by his determination and dedication. So was Professor B. R. Deodhar, who often quoted Majid Khan as a brilliant example of voice training. He would tell his students that, in spite of old age, and through perseverance, Majid Khan was able to mould his voice.[80]

The teachings of Alladiya Khan changed his attitude to music and life, and finally quenched his thirst for knowledge. In all humility Majid Khan would say, "I do not think that there is a single, recognized and traditional *raga* which I have not learned, played or at least heard."

The last phase of Majid Khan's life was mainly dedicated to solo sarangi-playing and teaching.[120] A number of his solo recordings have been preserved by All India Radio, Bombay. When I first heard this music, I was overwhelmed by its almost child-like simplicity. It is devoid of any bravura or show, which is probably one of the reasons why Majid Khan attained little fame as a soloist. Many years later I began to appreciate the beauty and power of this serene music which, I have been told, was also influenced by the sarangi of Khadim Hussain Khan. It transports us to a time when there was no need for hurry, when great musicians searched for purity and ecstasy. There is little doubt that Majid Khan belonged to this category of musicians, which has almost vanished; artists, who were able to realize themselves through their music.

In 1972, at the National Centre for the Performing Arts, Abdul Majid Khan gave his last public performance. He was accompanied by Ahmad Jan Thirakwa on *tabla*. Fortunately, I was present on this historical occasion . . . Five years later, on March 19, 1977, Ustadji died at the age of eighty-eight or eighty-nine.

He married thrice and had seven children, three of whom died prematurely. His two sons, Mohammad Sayid and Rashid Khan, received a thorough training from him in the vocal style of Alladiya Khan. His brother-in-law, Masit Khan (born in 1925), is his main sarangi disciple. He began learning at the age of four from his father, Shamman Khan, and continued with Abdul Majid Khan from the time

he was eight. From 1968 until the present day, Masit Khan has been a staff artist at All India Radio, Bombay, and is occasionally invited to give solo recitals. Although Masit Khan is not a direct descendant of the Jhajjar *khandan,* he is now regarded as its most important representative. "No one, except Masit Khan, has a mastery over the traditional *jor* style. All the other sarangiyas play *khayal,*" says Mohammad Hussain Khan. Few people, however, seem to be aware of this.

5.7 *An interview with Ram Narayan*

When the late Abdul Majid Khan listened to a recital of Ram Narayan in the early sixties, he is reported to have said, "as far as virtuosity and tunefulness are concerned, Ram Narayan has even surpassed Bundu Khan." Another old sarangi player commented: "Ram Narayan plays as if his hand is flying. It is so light, so sweet, never stops and is completely drenched in *sur.* This is a gift of God. Even if one were to practise for fifteen hours a day, it would be impossible to reach his standard of playing . . . "[81] Many of his senior colleagues have praised him in similar terms. Ram Narayan is indeed a phenomenon; in his hands, the sarangi has become a truly emancipated solo instrument, released from its confined environment. Furthermore, it was Ram Narayan, with his breathtaking recitals and record albums, who made the sarangi known to the world at large. [121, 122, xiv]

To me, Ram Narayan (born on December 25, 1927 in Udaipur) is one of the few musicians who can show that the classical music of India is both traditional and contemporary, always changing. Traditional, because he adheres strictly to ancient melodic principles. And modern, because during the many years

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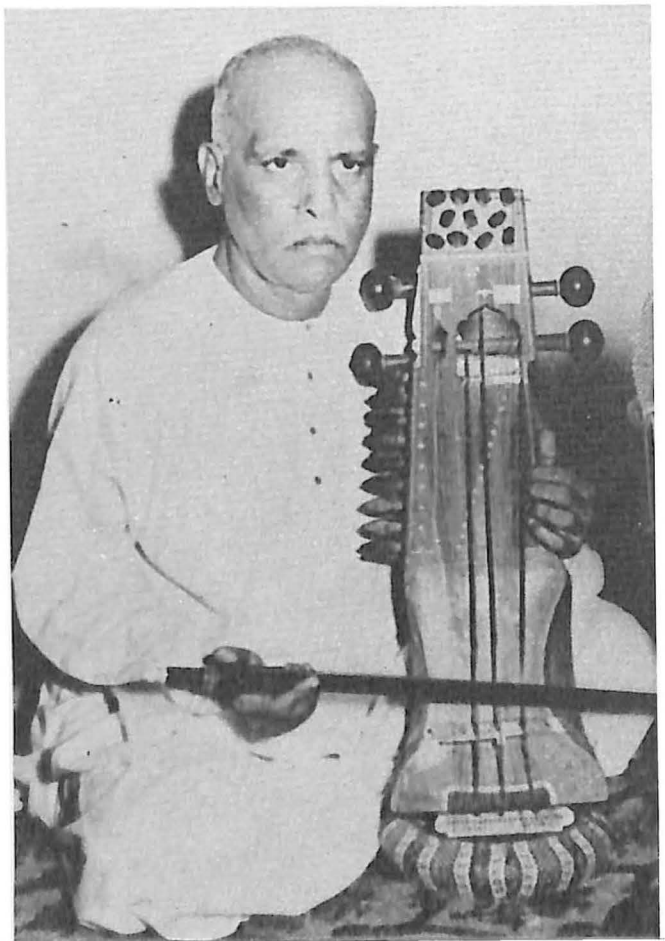


that I have known and heard Ram Narayan, his music has undergone an astonishing, almost revolutionary development.

Fortunately, Ram Narayan is very much alive today. Whenever I meet him, he radiates the same authority and confidence as he did eighteen years ago, when I became his pupil. There is always that bright, mischievous smile, that joviality and at the same time that inner tension of the artist who wants to surpass himself. Although the story of Ram Narayan's life has been discussed in detail in *Indian Music in Performance*, a book which he wrote together with Neil Sorrell, I requested the maestro to elucidate some of the less-known aspects of his training, career and individualistic approach to the sarangi.[82]

* * *

"It all began with a small sarangi that was left by our Ganga guru. As a young boy of five or six, I felt attracted to this instrument, took a stick and began imitating the sarangi players I had seen—there were many dancing girls and sarangi players in Udaipur in those days. I asked my father to repair the sarangi, and he put strings on it and made a bow. Then he gave me a few lessons, and, after a fortnight or so, I could play the *sargam* pretty much in tune.

"My father, Nathuji Biawat, was not a professional musician. He played a little *dilruba*, but somehow taught me the correct fingering technique for sarangi.[83] This was a unique gift, and, thanks to this, I progressed as fast as I did . . . I could play things with ease, which other sarangi players, using different fingering systems, were unable to produce. For that, I give all credit to my father.

"After a year, my father took me to several sarangi players. One of them was Mehbub Khan of Jaipur, a very good musician who is still alive. Like the other sarangi players he told my father that I had first to change my fingering technique before he could teach me, but my father refused and brought me back home. Nevertheless, I respect Mehbub Khan as a very fine and knowledgeable sarangi player.

"My next guru after my father—I was nine or ten years old—was Udai Lal of Udaipur, an old and very learned sarangi player, who had received training from Allabande and Zakiruddin Khan, the famous *dhrupad* singers. Udai Lalji used to tell me that, over a period of twenty years, he did all kinds of household chores in their home, bringing water from the well, washing their clothes, buying vegetables and so on, and in the remaining time he would practise. He possessed nothing, not even a mirror to shave in. He was a very humble and saintly man, and, at night, he would always go to the Rama temple to play and sing, till four or five in the morning, after which he would return home and go to sleep.

"But the problem was that even at the age of seventy, Udai Lalji thought he had not learned enough. All the time he kept saying. 'I don't know anything. I am still trying to reach the essence of music. How can I find the time to teach you?' So the only way out for me was to sit down quietly, listen to him practise and observe him. At that time I was really very sharp, just like a tape recorder. I would go home, practise what I had heard, and a few days later I would play it for him. Then he would comment, 'All right' or 'Do it like this', and explain a few things. Although he never really taught me, he was always kind enough to confirm that I was developing in the right direction.

"About a year later, Udai Lalji fell ill and died. Soon after that I came into contact with Madhav Prasad, an old singer from Maihar. I began travelling around with him, serving him, and later on accompanying him. But after four years I returned to Udaipur to check if what I was playing was the correct style and technique for sarangi. I also began teaching music in a school and earned 50 rupees a month, which was a lot. I became very vain, bought a new bicycle, a watch and smart clothes. Then suddenly, Madhav Prasadji turned up in Udaipur. He asked me what I was doing and I told him proudly, 'I am a teacher and earning a lot of money'. He looked at me and said, 'If you go on like this, every year your salary will increase by five or ten rupees, and after a few years you will earn 75 rupees. Then you will get married, and ultimately when you retire, you will perhaps earn 300 rupees. But as a musician you will be a nobody!' I was shocked by the truth of this statement and asked him, 'When are you leaving?' Then I went to the school to hand in my resignation, and bought a train ticket. The next day we left.

"For six months we travelled to various places where he performed, until he died in Lucknow. I went back to Udaipur but had a tough time because I did not want to go back to the teaching job that I had left earlier. The next year I practised very hard in an old, deserted temple with wonderful acoustics. Often I played till four o'clock in the morning, and only went home to eat in the afternoon and to sleep.

"Before Madhav Prasadji passed away, he had advised me to go to Lahore and try to learn from Abdul Wahid Khan. So, in 1944, I travelled to Lahore, hoping to find a job in a film studio. But the person I was supposed to meet was not there. I felt miserable and was anxious to go back to Udaipur, but I did not even have enough money to buy a train ticket, and had to spend the night in a *dharmashala*. The next morning I decided to go to the radio station and try my luck as a singer! The music producer, Pandit Jivan Lal Mattoo, interviewed me and immediately noticed the grooves in my fingernails. I was a fool to think I could pass for a vocalist. Panditji asked me to sing something anyway, but after fifteen minutes he interrupted and said, 'Why don't you play the sarangi for us?' I played for an hour and several staff artists came to listen to me. When I stopped, they asked me to continue and play another *raga*. To my utter surprise, Panditji offered me a job there and then, and he also found me a room to stay in. He was just like a father to me and helped me very much.

"Luckily, Pandit Jivan Lal Mattoo was one of the foremost disciples of Abdul Wahid Khan, and thanks to his intervention I was able to start learning from Khansahib. But it was not that easy. Abdul Wahid Khan was a very sober, disciplined and religious man, and was basically against teaching and performing in public. One had to surrender completely to learn from him. In the end he taught me four *ragas*: Yaman, Bhairav, Puria and Patdip, and whenever I had to broadcast a particular *raga*, he would tell me to write down the *chalan* and develop the *raga* on these lines. And it worked! He would say, 'If you know how to move up and down in the scale of a *raga*, and stay within that range, nothing can go wrong'. He was a truly great master.

"My four gurus gave equally good things to me. Whenever I think about them and what they taught me, I feel content and peaceful. They were really marvellous people. My father gave me the fundamental fingering for sarangi and Udai Lalji taught me the basics of *dhrupad-dhamar*. And the systematic approach to *khayal*

of Madhav Prasadji and Abdul Wahid Khansahib were extremely useful for my further development as a soloist.

"In playing *alap* and *jor,* I have also been influenced by Ziauddin Khansahib (the father of Z. M. Dagar), who taught me a little bit. Although he was well-known in Udaipur, I had never heard him sing until 1945, when he gave a concert in the house of Hirabai. All the important musicians of Lahore were present. He began singing Marva and for an hour he was only expounding three notes : *Dha, Ni* and *Re.* Everyone was overwhelmed and some people were actually crying . . . This was real music!

"In Lahore there were at least twenty superb singers such as Abdul Wahid Khan, Bade Ghulam Ali Khan, Chote Ghulam Ali, Barkat Ali, Ashiq Ali Khan, Umid Ali Khan, Dilip Chandra Vedi, Bhai Lal, Mubarak Ali, Ghulam Rasul, Qadir Faridi, Niaz Hussain Shami, Bibe Khan, Hirabai, Mukhtar Begum, Inatibai Dheruwali, and so on. Every day four or five good singers would broadcast on the radio and I thoroughly enjoyed playing with them. Musically speaking it was a fantastic time.

"But there were not many good sarangi players in Lahore, except for Haider Bakhsh Fallusa, a staff artist of HMV, who was very good in light classical music, and Ahmadi Khan who was related to the famous *tabla* player, Nathu Khan. He was a moody and carefree person, smoked a lot of hashish, but was a wonderful sarangi player. Baba Ghulam Mohammad, a staff artist at All India Radio, was technically not so good, but a very knowledgeable and fine person.[84]

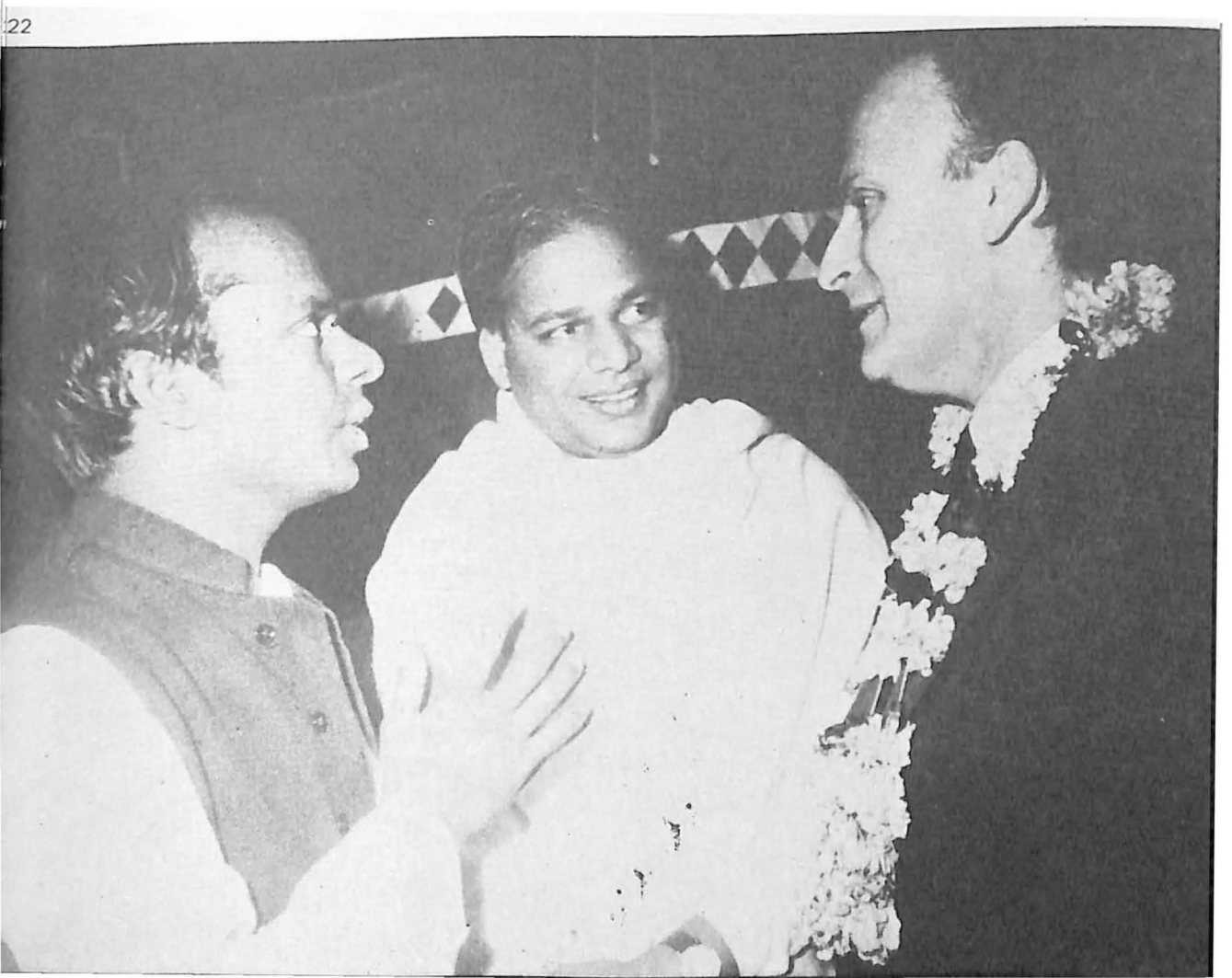
"After Partition in 1947, I went to Delhi and continued working for two years at AIR, accompanying singers. Although I enjoyed this work, I got the same feeling I had when I was a school teacher in Udaipur. I thought to myself, 'If I stay here much longer, my own creativity will die.' This feeling first manifested itself when I played with Amir Khansahib in 1948. He sang a composition in *drut ektala* in *raga* Gujari Todi. I don't know what came over me, but when he began singing *tanas,* I put down my bow and listened to him attentively. When he reached *sam,* I started playing the same *tanas,* literally forcing him to listen to me. We were equal artists and the musicians who were present applauded my effort. The majority of singers, however, maintained that the accompanist should remain subdued. I thought, if there is so much music in me, why should I stay in the background, remain a slave, and get more and more frustrated?

"Following the advice of Onkar Nath Thakur, Krishnarao Shankar Pandit, Hirabai Barodekar and Gangubai Hangal, I moved to Bombay in 1949. Krishnaraoji, in particular, was helpful in introducing me to Bombay audiences and if I played well, Pandit Onkar Nath would encourage me to come to the fore. (If I did not play well, he would insult me on stage! This was his nature. He was a great man). These musicians had a very different attitude to the accompanist. And thanks to celebrated artists like Alladiya Khan, Kesarbai, Rajab Ali Khan and Aman Ali Khan, the concert-goers in Bombay were musically receptive. They understood what I was doing, and I received a lot of love and appreciation from them.

"Gradually I began to develop into a soloist. In 1950 I made three 78 r.p.m. records on which I played Gujari Todi, Marva, Lalit, Puria Kalyan, Gunkali and Pilu. The sound technician was a Britisher who bullied everybody and made me very nervous. For each recording he gave me just an hour, but in spite of that I am still quite

satisfied with the results. And in 1951, Vilayat Khan and I recorded the first LP's made in India.[85] Three years later, I gave my first solo recital for a large audience, but it was a disaster. I had to play before the main item, which was a *jugalbandi,* and the audience, impatiently waiting for this spectacle, drove me off the stage by hissing and booing. Naturally I was very upset, and for days I hardly ate or slept. After some contemplation, however, I decided that I should not give up at this point but rather persevere. It took me two years, however, before I had the courage to make another attempt in this direction, but this time the audience responded very favourably. Slowly I began to give up accompaniment, and after touring with Nazakat and Salamat Ali Khan in the early sixties, I stopped completely. From then on, I was accepted as a soloist.

"There is one thing I would like to emphasize. Sarangi players are generally much more alert and versatile than other musicians, because they have accompanied all kinds of vocalists—from *baijis, qawwals* and *thumri* singers to *khayal* and *dhrupad-dhamar* singers. They have to tune and retune their instrument four or five times a day, and, because of that, I think, they have a deeper understanding of tunefulness and intonation. Tuning a sarangi is not a waste of time. One always learns something and penetrates deeper into the subtle world of sound. It is not easy to tune the sarangi perfectly. It only happens to me once in a while, when the circumstances are optimal, when I am in a good and peaceful mood, and when I have time to concentrate.



"To play solo sarangi, one must have a good knowledge of *ragas, talas*, current styles and forms, and total control over both the right and the left hand. All these things I have learned, either from my gurus or by experience on the stage. And other things I have invented. To give you a few examples: some forty years ago I was the first to fix the keynote to F sharp, and everybody, including Gopal Mishra and Shakur Khan, followed me in this respect. I also began using a slight vibrato, and started playing *gamak* in a different way, using both hands. Normally, one plays *tanas* consisting of separate notes with either separate bow strokes or in one, long bow. I have developed a particular style of playing *tanas* with double notes, and, while playing, I make all kinds of rhythmical variations with my bow. I use four octaves, I have paid a great deal of attention to bringing out the perfect sound of the sarangi, and have come to understand how one should use the right hand.

"When you play the open strings, there is always a slightly different sound from the up or down bow. One has to be very careful, therefore, to apply the same pressure everywhere, otherwise the continuity of sound will be broken. Bowing is extremely important and there should be a certain system to it. If you play a *tana* in one bow, you have to understand what will happen if you play it in two bows, or three bows and so on. You should know when to use an up or down bow, and when to change the bow. This is the way I have studied it.

"It is very difficult to play solo sarangi. If one has mastered only one style,it is impossible to play for two or three hours and hold the attention of the listener. One has to know many styles and be able to make all kinds of variations. The sarangi is a fabulous instrument and I have tried to get as much as possible out of it, without going against its nature. I don't use my left hand unnaturally, or use my bow the way our Indian violinists do. I have always remained very traditional and faithful to the style of the sarangi."

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To conclude, sarangi players can be great virtuoso performers (as accompanists or soloists) and teachers. They may be acknowledged as traditionalists, as innovators, or as a combination of both. What matters most is that the music they play be a true reflection of their temperament and soul. Indian music has taught me that irrespective of fame, a musician can be great only if he is great as a person.