

TRADITION, MUSIC, AND AESTHETICS: EXPLORING THE DELICACY OF GURU-SHISHYA PARAMPARA IN NAMITA DEVIDAYAL'S *THE MUSIC ROOM* (2007)

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Abstract

*Contextualizing a narrative with a performing art is a delicate issue. How Indian Classical Music can be seen as a major hypostasis and can be contextualized with English literature is still a valid hypothetical question and an emerging area for research scholars. Namita Devidayal, a journalist with the Times of India, where she has written on a range of subjects, handles this delicacy in her *The Music Room* (2007) where she contextualizes the narrative with the Discourse of Indian Classical Music. Being a practitioner of the craft who has taken taleem under Vidushi Dhondutai Kulkarni, one of the exponents of Jaipur Atrauli Gharana, has tried to tangle the ideas of the Indian Classical system with the narrative, and emphasized on too many aspects including a detailed exposition to the Jaipur Gharana; the ideas of the system such as –Vadi and Samavadi; the delicacy of Sangat; the discipline of the Guru-Shishya Parampara; and how the narrative can be juxtaposed with the ideas of the theory of 'Rasa'. The paper identifies the different threads between the Diegetic narrative and the Mimetic art and concentrates on the aspect as to how the language of the text can relate to a particular emotion, thus invoking the emotions of the Ragas.*

Keywords: Aesthetics, Cultural Studies, Guru-Shishya Parampara, Indian Classical Music, Music Realism

INTRODUCTION

Contextualisation is important for the identification of different discourses. It is because meaning and interpretation depend largely on contextualisation. When we talk about the existence of a text, it is believed by many scholars that a text does not rely on itself; rather, it relies on subtexts and contexts. While talking about the existence of a poem [text], Murray Krieger, an American literary critic and theorist remarks:

“Having achieved this articulate identity, these forces have an effect been reduced to a new word (defined in and through the poem itself) in the poet's and his culture's vocabulary, which has now enlarged its capacity to speak. Of course, they can win this new 'existent' status, in which they are ready to be extracted from the poem and more thinly applied to other contexts in order to serve their culture's discursive needs...” (Kriiegar, “The Aesthetics as the Anthropological”, p. 202).

A piece of literature not only gives us a flavour of a literary style, but it also explores the other contributing factors that shape the existence of a text- clearly, what Roland Barthes termed as ‘Hypostases’ in his *The Death of the Author* (1968):

“Once the Author is removed, the claim to decipher a text becomes quite futile... Such a conception suits criticism very well, the latter then allotting itself the important task of discovering the Author (or its hypostases: society, history, psyche, liberty) beneath the work...” (Barthes, *The Death of the Author*, p. 168).

Painting, Politics, Gender, Economy, History, Sociology, Science, Psychology, Chronotope etc., all of them can serve as an underlying reality to create a discourse. Similarly, like all other things, Music can also serve as a subtext. Contextualisation of every other art form with Literature is still an area that can be developed and explored in many different ways. That is what makes literature interesting and experimental in nature. This idea influenced a lot at the starting point of this investigation to probe deeper into the two distinct disciplines- Literature and Indian Classical Music. How Indian Classical Music can be seen as a major hypostasis and can be contextualized with English literature, is still a valid hypothetical question and an emerging area for research scholars. Dealing with two different art forms is a tricky work, because it demands a great amount of

understanding of the two individual subjects. In my case, being a practicing scholar of Classical Music, it helped me during the analysis.

Namita Devidayal is a journalist with the *Times of India*, where she has written on a range of subjects from a satirical column called 'Yummy Mummy' to personal finance; to culture. In her *The Music Room* (2007), she mentions that she had to go overseas time and again for her higher studies, interrupting her regular music sessions. She is a professionally trained singer and has taken 'taleem' under her Guru, Vidushi Dhondutai Kulkarni, the renowned vocalist of Jaipur-Atrauli Gharana. Now, one can understand that, as she spent more years outside their 'Homeland', there can be a diasporic thrust within them to be connected with the roots. Their own lessons of music, somehow, gave them the chance to stay connected with the Indian-ness which they have considered as their primary cultural identity. So, whatever they write about music, it is my belief that they have tried to explore the very essence of music as a cultural identity. But why is it that among many other things, they have necessarily chosen Indian classical music as an emblem of their 'Home' identity and they are deliberately dealing with it? To answer this question, it must be mentioned first what are the hypothetical problems that the subject is facing in recent times.

LITERATURE REVIEW

During 1950s, there were some scholars who were engaged into the extensive study of culture in United Kingdom. In 1964, in Birmingham, the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies was founded, and that is how Cultural Studies came into circulation. The emergence of Cultural Studies was exclusively an English phenomenon. It all centered round England because right from the beginning, the whole movement was under the leadership of certain very distinguished academicians who were very anxious about the threats to British culture. To understand this point, we must understand two questions first- Who were the attackers? And, who were the concerned people to take up the challenge to face these issues? The threat that I am primarily talking about, is purely a post-war phenomenon. After 1945, British culture was under a serious threat of American culture and Americanisation of British culture. The proponents of Cultural studies called it 'Mass Culture'. Stuart Hall, one of the chief exponents of Cultural Studies, remarks in his *Cultural Studies 1983* (1983):

"As far as the population was concerned, it was all going extremely well here and there. But significant changes in the patterns of social life were taking place that, in a very rough way, seemed to mark off the postwar from the prewar period, changes which can be identified with American culture's taking the historical lead in a global context: the diminishing sharpness of class relations; the drifting and incorporation of sectors of the working and lower-middle classes into the professional and nonprofessional commercial classes; the beginnings of mass cultures; the massive penetration of the mass media and the beginnings of a television age; the rapid expansion of a consciousness led by consumer advertising, et cetera." (Hall, *Cultural Studies 1983*, p. 06).

It is believed by many British academicians that the very well known legacy of 'High' British culture- Poetry, Prose, Painting, Art, Food, Music etc. were threatened by a mass American Culture- the Fast Foods, Jazz, Popular Music, Blues and Beatles, Cinema and Cowboy films. The American Culture, though it has a distinguished identity, has never been seen to be an authentic standard culture by British society. In fact, that happens with Indian culture as well. During the time of colonial rule, neither American culture, nor Indian culture was seen to be an authentic culture that can be shared by British community on an equal level. That is why there has always been a highbrow-lowbrow attitude regarding the concept of culture which is seen in the European society. So, according to the British academia, there has been much deterioration in the taste of aesthetics as well. Raimond Williams, another chief proponent of Cultural Studies remarks in his *Culture & Society 1780- 1950* (1958):

“Is it true that ‘the modern citizen’ hardly knows how the necessities of life come to him? What is true, I would argue, is that a number of new kinds of unsatisfying work have come into existence; a number of new kinds of cheap entertainment; and a number of new kinds of social division.” (Williams, *Culture & Society 1780- 1950*, pp. 278-79).

So, naturally, the original concern of the British Academia was how to put a ‘No’ to this mass culture and how to defend the autonomy of British culture. The concern that Richard Hoggart, Raimond Williams, E. P. Thompson and Stuart Hall showed regarding the British culture, was the same concern that had troubled Devidayal in case of Indian culture. Indian classical music has a rich cultural legacy that has already influenced the world in a greater way. But, somehow, the thrust to learn music or to make it a profession is not seen among the youngsters. Classical music demands a great deal of patience and disciplinary practice. That is why we have seen very less number of people who even dare to learn it properly. After the independence of India, it has already been seventy three years, and in these years what we have witnessed is nothing but a better economic metropolitan development under the name of ‘Modernization’ which happened under the broad influence of globalization. To see it very broadly, the Americanization in Indian context began during 1950-60 when John F. Kennedy was the US president (Sengupta). The India-US public relations got affected during the Cold War and that was how Americanization came into the field with Nehru’s interference. Hollywood remained a major way through which Americanization established itself in the Indian context. The Americanization of Indian culture, somehow, devastated the whole idea of ‘Culture’ in the Indian society. Kavery Nambisan, a novelist from India claims: “Americanization has destroyed the majority of the community, the majority of culture. There’s a regular programme in this regard that an American organization is conducting in collaboration with an Indian university. This is sad.” (Nambisan, “Indians Losing Cultural Identity Because of Americanisation”, www.thenews.com.pk). When we talk of Indian culture; there is aesthetics, etiquettes, discipline and values associated with it. As a result, we can see that we do not have any distinct identity anymore; it has started intermingling with other elements and what we get is a hybridized identity- a fusion, where the real identity is lost.

In the late 20th century, the fast food culture and fusion music have gained much popularity. Whether fusion is bad or good, that is an altogether different question. But, somehow, it has taken over classical music and the cultural identity that has been talked of very often, is lost. It is because, through the amalgamation, the distinct identity is lost. Devidayal and Chaudhuri, both of them have a very keen interest to hold their ‘roots’. Professor Himadri Lahiri, a former professor from Department of English and Culture Studies, University of Burdwan, India, writes in his book *Diaspora Theory and Transnationalism* (2019):

“The word ‘route’ has become a familiar term in contemporary discourses. It is one of the chief features of modern life, characterized by frequent movements both inside and outside nationstates. Popularized by James Clifford, the word suggests a way of life that is sharply in contrast to the one conveyed by the term ‘root’, which denotes a preference for ‘accustomed earth’ and relatively stable culture(s) that develop there.” (Lahiri, *Diaspora Theory and Transnationalis*, p. 01).

After reading all the primary and secondary texts, I began writing my dissertation primarily with two hypotheses:

- That, in recent times, either under the influence of integrative motivation [i.e. the desire to be integrated within the target language culture]; or under the influence of instrumental motivation for getting higher studies and better job opportunities; or under the mindset to live a better economically better life style where they can be a distinct part of Modernity; people tend to leave their home country in order to settle abroad for a better ‘Economy’. What happens in between is that, the identity of ‘Home’ with its ‘values’ is lost in many cases, and that becomes a nostalgia for them. In order to search for the lost identity, they



started writing pieces where such a diasporic nostalgia is very much prevalent. For Devidayal, Indian classical music becomes a cultural identity which represents that diasporic nostalgia, as well as it works as an emblem of a traditional culture. This traditional emblem becomes a motif for both of them through which they can celebrate their 'roots'. And secondly;

- That by intermingling this cultural emblem [Indian Classical music] within their narrative, it becomes an exploration of a context where they can set a parallel between two art forms- literature and Classical music. The narratives not only become an exploration of the musical structures and features which are found in Classical system, but they explore too many musical ideas which are connected with Indian culture, aesthetics and musicality. With the help of this cultural emblem, they tried to discover a distinct discourse in literature- a discourse of Music; where the discourse of Indian classical music becomes an underlying reality- a 'hypostasis'.

ANALYSIS

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF CLASSICAL MUSIC AS 'ROYAL MUSIC' WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO JAIPUR GHARANA:

Namita Devidayal herself said in an interview that: "It's [the novel] my personal journey into the world of Indian classical music. It's also the study of three great singers from Jaipur gharana, Alladiya Khan, Kesarbai and Dhondutai who came from different background, and how their lives intertwined." (Someshwar, "There was a lot of pain, a lot of struggle"). *The Music Room* (2007), in a very unique way, explores the historical development of Indian Classical Music and its different forms. On one hand, it explores how the Indian classical system came into being. And on the other, it talks about the historical development of three major forms of the system –Dhrupad, Khayal and Thumri. It is a fact that cannot be ignored that the Classical System began with Dhrupad but what remains today is the beautiful gesture of Khayal. With the emergence of the two primary forms, we also witness a strict prejudice about the religion and culture that contributed in the development of Indian Classical music. Most of the musicologists believe that the idea of music came from Hindu 'Sanatana' [classical] religion where at one point of time, the religious hymns were chanted in a particular melodic tune. Historical evidences claim that it was sage Bharat Muni who introduced the primary scales for chantings around 500-600 BC. Vedic chants used only three notes, as O C Gangoly, an Indian musicologist says in his book *Ragas and Raginis* (2017):

"By legend and tradition Indian music is supposed to be derived from, and have its roots in, the Vedas... The Saman chants appear to be melodies of three notes (tetrachord?) known as udatta (raised), anudatta (not raised) and svarita (sounded, graced). This seems to be borne out by the sutras of Panini." (Gangoly, *Ragas and Raginis*, p. 11).

Later on, when time passed the three notes expanded into five and seven. But, the idea of Raga developed when people tried to understand the music and its relation with Rasa. The scholars and poets started composing into different tunes and tried to fit the Vedic hymns into it. And that is how Dhrupad came into being. Vijay Bazaz Razdan, an Indian music scholar is of the opinion that Dhrupad, the phrase, has been originated from the term 'Dhruva' which means 'truth of God, and pada or a fixed line.' (Razdan, *Hindustani Ragas*, p. 17). It is primarily a form that was used for Gods and Goddesses, and as the subject of dealing is serious in nature, that is why the music became serious and sublime in its aesthetic expression. Devidayal writes: "In India, organized music was initially sung in the temples. The compositions praised God; the audience was comprised of devotees. Gradually, between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries, the music moved to the royal courts and developed into a somber, stately style called dhrupad." (Devidayal, *The Music Room*, p. 98). So, the classical singers were appointed as the court and temple singers at the time of Royal period. And that is how Classical music became Royal music under the patronage of Kings. We find evidence in Devidayal who talked about





how Alladiya Khan became the Royal singer at Kolhapur Mahalakshmi Temple. As we all know, India is primarily a place that witnessed a lot of foreign invasions. The practice of Dhrupad started declining at the time of Islamic invasions. The Mughals tried to convert people into Islam from other existing religions and the musicians were not exceptions in that case. In fact, the founder of Jaipur-Atrauli Gharana, Ustad Alladiya Khan's forefathers were Hindu. We find evidence in Devidayal: "Alladiya Khan was born into the family of Nath Vishwambhara, the direct descendant of Haridas Swami, the great singer and saint who taught Tansen." (Devidayal, *The Music Room*, p. 95). When the King of Anup Shahar, a small state near Delhi, was captured by the emperor of Delhi: Alladiya Khan's forefather who was a court musician went to rescue his king. He sang a song under the Emperor's command for which the Emperor becomes happy and offered the musician a prize. The musician wanted nothing but the release of the king on which the Emperor agreed, but with the condition that the musician must convert himself into Islam. That's how it was done. Later when they were appointed as the court singer, all the discourse of music changed as the earlier compositions were addressed to the Hindu Gods and Goddesses at the temples. But, now they have found the place in king's palace where the glory of a king is sung. It may seem cruel that how the glory of Hindu classicality became the glory of Islamic community, but it is undoubtedly true that it was the Islamic community that held this Classical Parampara [legacy] more than anything else. If we are studying the theologies of music now, it became possible only for them. It was they who guarded the cultural heritage of India for more than a decade. The rendition of compositions into Khayal from Dhrupad originally took place at around mid 16th century under the able guidance of Mia Tansen, who was the court singer of Mughal Emperor Akbar. Devidayal writes:

"By the end of the nineteenth century, most musicians had converted into Islam...the legendary singer Tansen, was born Hindu, but once the emperor Akbar adopted him into his court, he converted. Born Ram Tanu Mishra, he became Mia Tansen and the texts of his compositions changed from evocations of Hindu Gods to praise of Muslim saints..." (Devidayal, *The Music Room*, p. 99).

Though Kumar Prasad Mukhopadhyay, and eminent scholar of music, is of the opinion that Khuda Bakhsh was the one who invented Khayal. He writes in his book *মাহফিল* (2006) [Mehfil] "The tradition of Dhrupad and Dhamar belongs to Agra Gharana. Khuda Bakhsh was the one who brought Kheyal. Though, the maestros of Agra Gharana do not accept this universal argument." [Translation] (Mukhopadhyay, *Mehfil*, p. 89). So far as the proper structure of Khayal is concerned, Prof. Amlan Das Gupta is of the opinion that it actually began in the nineteenth century as he writes in his paper entitled "Words for Music Perhaps: Reflections on the Khayal Bandish": "The nineteenth century saw the emergence of khayal singing as the principal form of performance practice in North Indian Classical music. It is commonly seen as having, in the last two hundred years, largely displaced the dhrupad, and having gained a unique kind of cultural prominence." (Gupta, 239). The Hindu-Muslim dichotomy remained in the society but the fact cannot be ignored that the classical music we witness now is basically the confluence of both Hindu and Islamic traditions and ideologies. Swami Pranjanananda in his book *A Historical Study of Indian Music* (1965) says that:

"Kheyal or Khyal (Kheyal in Bengali and Khyal in Hindi and Urdu) seems to be an Arabic term, meaning 'thought', 'imagination', 'fancy', 'ideation', 'imaginative conception'...therefore, kheyal or khyal connotes the idea of some sort of song or verse which is imaginative and conceptual in its nature...Khyal is imaginative in conception." (Pranjanananda, *A Historical Study of Indian Music*, p. 202).

The high subject that was sung at the temples, somehow lost its glory, and ordinary matters started interfering. Among the highest of the order, the theme of metaphysical love is seen primarily in Khayal. This idea was primarily nurtured by 'Devdasis' in Indian culture who were trained in Music and Dance as both the forms





were seen to be daily rituals in offerings. That theme of love lost its importance when Thumri emerged. Devidayal writes:

“Devadasis were India’s version of the Japanese geisha, women who were trained in the fine art of entertainment...Society’s attitude towards these women was ambivalent and rife with double standards. While they were viewed as ‘working women’, they were also perceived as incarnations of goddess. Over the years, with Muslim dynasties taking over much of India, the arts moved out of the temples... By the eighteenth century, the courtesan singers had popularized a new genre, essentially derived from the traditional khayal, but with a lighter, more decorative, edge. It was Thumri, a languid, sensual style... Singers changed from temple performers to entertainers who relied on wealthy patrons for support...” (Devidayal, *The Music Room*, p. 210).

One can surely understand here that how the idea of singing and dancing changed and started taking a different connotation. Most of the female singers had to sing for their living, but the patrons wanted something more than the music, and that is where the whole of the Devadasi system collapsed into the ‘Kothas’ where people search for amusement, not out of music, but out of sensuality. Kumar Prasad Mukhopadhyay in his book *Kheyal-o-Hindustani Sangeeter Abakshaya* (2003) i.e. The Degradation of Khayal and Hindustani Music] argued: “The aristocrat culture helped in degradation of Khayal music. They used the sublime art to satisfy their own sensual appeals. The colonial culture gave rise to Renaissance, but in Bengal, it gave us the ‘Babu’ culture. It is my personal opinion that this is a religious, social and cultural destruction that caused the loss of high values in us. As a result, what we got is non-standard culture.” [Translation] (Mukhopadhyay, *Kheyal-o-Hindustani Sangeeter Abakshaya*, p. 89). That is why Dhondutai was against the idea of Thumri, as she believes in higher art forms and not the cheap ones. Though, later singers have tried their level best to compose religious Thumris dedicated to the Gods who incarnate love.

INDIAN CLASSICAL MUSIC AND THE IMPORTANCE OF GHARANA:

The Indian Classical System is divided into Gharanas. The term ‘Gharana’ originated from the word ‘Ghar’ which means a school in this respect that is developed due to a distinct style as well as for the geographical locations. Kedar R Mukadam, a former Ph.d Scholar from Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, remarks in his dissertation: “The word Gharānā has come from the word ghar. Just as ghar means ‘home’, or tradition and family, the word gharānā, in the language of music theory, gharānā means a personal style or tradition...The meaning of gharānā can be said to be ‘family tradition’ as well, which means the continuation of a personal or family style over generations.” (08). Each and every gharana have their own stylistic approach in composition the raga-texts and in their presentation as well, as Devidayal points out:

“A gharana is thus a lineage of hereditary musicians and the particular musical style they present. It is generally named after the founder’s hometown or the place where s/he flourished.” (Devidayal, *The Music Room*, p. 144).

What is important to note in this statement is the phrase ‘lineage of hereditary musician’. This is another very important issue that has been raised by Devidayal in her narrative. It has already been talked about how Indian classical music became the Royal music of India. Now, the question can be asked that, why this music is taught through Guru-Shishya parampara; through family lineage only. The first reason is that the stylistic features that emerged out of the knowledge through the music of different Gharanas are regarded to be sacred as a religious scriptures. To the people of lineage, it is their cultural and ancestral identity, and that must be respected first. There is no doubt about it that in developing the Indian classical music, the contribution of some particular families cannot be denied. Secondly, it is also believed that only worthy people who have the highest of the regards regarding the subject, can learn this music. This is the reason why before teaching; many of the Gurus still now ask the new students how far they know the subject. It is not because that the Guru





wants to know whether the shishya knows anything or not, but it is a test to examine how much s/he is serious about the subject. Those who have the most serious attitude towards learning the subject can only excel in this case. We find Dhondutai complaining to Baba (the grandson of Alladiya Khan), that why he teaches this secret of knowledge of their lineage to the 'unworthy' people: "At least treat this music with some respect. It is not to be distributed to the undeserving.'... He didn't reply because he knew she was right." (Devidayal, *The Music Room*, p. 140).

This happened due to the fact that the sublime Royal music which has been regarded as the highest of all musical forms lost its sublimity with the fall of Feudal and Royal system. The patronage that has been supporting the classical artists all along has been moved away. So, naturally the artists, in order to continue their living, had to start teaching outside their family lineage. One can relate to the contemporary situation as well. People who had the government jobs can get their salary in the present 2020 pandemic lockdown situation, but an artist who live simply on concerts, can hardly bear with the loss. So, that is the moment when the glory of the royal music became an object of business transaction. This, again, put emphasis on the fact that Devidayal put forward about learning and 'taleem' under a guru vs. learning in a music school. This is a very obvious reason that in case of schools, the number of students will be more. So, the point of profit is there. But how many students are learning the music sincerely, is a matter can be contested.

Sometimes, it also happens that a child is serious about his/her music, but inspite of the fact that s/he is excels in the art, s/he doesn't choose a professional career in music. And that hurts a Guru the most. If the students excels in the deeds and still doesn't choose the profession according to Guru's choice, then the Guru feels a little down, because in a way, the worthy ones are not doing their best to preserve the secret of the parampara of a gharana that they have been learning from ages. We find this agony in Dhondutai as well when she utters: "After this, you will see why I tell you to give up your foolish studies and focus on something you are uniquely gifted with. Anyone can go out and get a BA. This, only you can do. And it is an insult to God to throw away a gifted voice." (Devidayal, *The Music Room*, p. 119).

Regarding Gharanas, one very crucial fact is seen, that some maestros have the peculiar stubbornness not to share anything outside their religious community. This is a mindset that cannot be changed until the change comes from within. I have already mentioned about how Dhrupad music changed into Khayal music during British and Mughal raj. Like the Hindu communities who have loved and helped in developing the Dhrupad form, Muslim community has also helped in retaining the knowledge of the Khayal music. The more the tension gloomes over the relation between Muslim and Hindu Community, the more the distinction between these two forms become clear. It is as if each of the forms becomes the identity of each of the community respectively. I was reminded of a Marathi film directed by Subodh Bhawe, based on a play written by Purushottam Darvekar- *Katyar Kaljat Ghusali* (2015). In the film, Shankar Mahadevan, the famous play-back music director played the role of Pt. Bhanu Shankar who is a practitioner of Dhrupad music and had been the Royal musician for fourteen years at the court of king Vishnuraj, the king of Vishrampur. On the other hand, Sachin Pilgaonkar played the role of Khansaheb Aftab Hussain Bareliwale who had tried to defeat Bhanu Shankar for 14 years but failed. At last he defeated Panditji through a conspiracy and became the Royal musician. Due to the conspiracy Pt. Bhanu Shankar lost his divine voice and could'nt sing no more. Sadashiv Gurav (played by Subodh Bhawe himself) was a gandabandh disciple of Panditji who tried to convince Ustad Aftab Hussain for taleem but he was very determined not to share the knowledge of his gharana with a Hindu Brahmin boy who had already been a disciple of his enemy. Sadashiv challenged Ustad ji for a duet that will determine the fate of theirs and will declare who will be the next Royal musician. The duet took place and Sadashiv sang the Khayal at last that he learned from Ustad ji while he was working as a servant at his household. Ustad Aftab Hussain tried to kill Sadashiv as he had stolen the knowledge indirectly from him and



has brought a shame. But as Sadashiv sang, the court, including Aftab Hussain, submerged into the rasa of the music in such a way that Khan Saheb forgot what he was going to do. And thus, at the end, music won over everything.

Swami Haridas was a Brahmin; born as Ram Tanu Mishra, Mia Tansen was a Hindu; belong to the same lineage, the founder of Jaipur Gharana Alladiya Khan was also a Hindu. Due to some reasons, which I have already mentioned earlier, Alladiya Khan became Muslim. But inspite of being a Muslim, he didn't have any prejudice like that of ustad Aftab Hussain. Devidayal mentioned that he firmly believed in Satyanarayan puja whenever any of his family members became ill. Dhondutai had the chance to learn from Alladiya Khan, Bhurji Khan and Kesarbai Kerkar. But Alladiya Khan never distinguished among his students according to their communal identity. He taught music as a Guru who was not biased and never discriminated his student for his 'Jat' [community]. There's hidden the great fact regarding a Guru. A Guru is someone who does not care for the external realities like community, religion and caste. Rather, the only liability a Guru has is to guide the worthy ones through the secret knowledge of the Gharana. To Alladiya Khan, music was everything; music was his 'religion' as Dhondutai exclaims: "Like the great saint-poet Kabir, who called himself neither Hindu, nor Muslim, Khansahib lived and died- in a no-man's land that few could appreciate. He ate meat, but he also wore the sacred thread of high caste Hindus. He was a follower of Islam, but he composed thoughtful, profound verses that revealed an understanding of Hindu philosophy. He did his namaz every day, but sang with complete devotion in temples. He gave the greatest gems of his music to non-Muslim singers, his religion was music."

INDIAN CLASSICAL MUSIC AS A GURU-MUKHI VIDYA

On a very popular note, a question has been asked by many scholars, is that why this subject i.e. Indian Classical Music is Guru-Mukhi [the subject that can only be learned under the direction of a Guru]. To answer the question, I would discuss two paradigms here- one is the basic difference between 'Vidya' and bookish knowledge. And second- the difference between Music School and Gurukul. Whatever is written in a book can be read or understood. If not understood or recognized, then a teacher can explain things to the student. But, Indian Classical Music is not a subject that is to be learned through bookish knowledge only. This is a practical experience that can only be learned while one is perceptible with one's Guru. I give an example here. In Indian classical taal-system, there are two bols called 'Tete'. The first one is generally played with the first three fingers on the gab or sehai [the black portion] of the right hand drum [tabla]; and the second one is played with the index finger on the same. But in some exceptional compositions, the combination is structured in a way that your fingers will demand the reverse Tete. If anyone doesn't know this secret, then it doesn't matter how much one practises it, one will never be able to gain the speed and beauty out of the composition as one's fingers will get tangled time and again. This is a knowledge that can never be learned through any book. It is because the whole of the system believed in Guru-Mukhi teaching, so they will not let the secrets out of their bag where traditional aesthetics and the glory of the gharana matter the most. Only a Guru can take you through this, and this is why this knowledge is 'secret' [as I mentioned earlier, 'Guhya'], and thus, Guru- Mukhi. We find this proof in Devidayal's writing:

"Teaching is as important a part of the process as performing, for this is what takes this music posterity. The books cannot tell you which raga to start with and how to keep time, why a particular taan is not sounding quite right. These are the secrets only a Guru can give you, selectively..." (Devidayal, *The Music Room*. p. 163).

We find this reference of secret knowledge on two occasions, and both of them share a deep connection with Ustad Alladiya Khan and Jaipur- Atrauli Gharana. We find Dhondutai mentioning 'Bol-taan'(235) and 'Two-note taan'(165). Bol-taan is something that has emerged primarily from the handicap of Ustad Alladiya Khan,

as he started breaking the notes into bols so that he can hold of the breath in a more prominent manner. So, in case of bol-taan, the divided phrasing is used to fill up the notes, while the notes only remain, and there will not be any utterance of the swara. 'Two-note taan', as it sounds, is very unique. And Dhondutai made Devidayal promise that she will not reveal anything about this as it belongs to the secret knowledge of the gharana. That is why Devidayal hasn't written anything about it. But most Indian music scholars believed that two-note taan is nothing but 'Gamak-taan'. Gamaka can be understood as embellishment done on a note or between two notes. Bimalakanta Roychaudhury is of the opinion that: "It [Gamaka] is an important variety of Sabdalamkara (vide Alamakara) [Ornamentation]... a particular way to produce and often repeat a particular note or a series of notes taking the grace of either the previous note or the following note." (35). There are fifteen types of Gamak taan (Bandyopadhyay 36) among which two specifically correspond to the idea of Dhondutai's Two-note taan. One is 'Kampita'; vibration of sound resembling that of Damaru, a small doubled-headed drum shaped like an hour-glass where notes are used twice in a beat. And the other is 'Namita'; where the sequence of two notes follows in the descending order. Both the ideas correspond to the theory of Two-note taan which is considered to be a contribution of Alladiya Khan. One can surely understand that the process of learning of these complex ideas demands patience, time, and discipline which can only be provided in a Guru-Shishya parampara.

The second reason is very problematic in nature. Around Calcutta, one will find several institutions which are named after great living maestros. But in most of the cases, people claim that the maestro himself doesn't teach the students. Rather, the senior students teach on behalf of them, and the schools became a place for 'Syllabus', 'Examination' and 'Stress'. These institutions are more concerned with their economic profit and hyperbolic imposed canonization. Guru-Shishya Parampara is strictly against this view of materialism. To this lineage, it is like a Sadhna- the worshipping of the supreme Goddess through a rigorous disciplinary practice of music. The very first thing that should come to us is the sublime aesthetic pleasure that, in a way, works as a therapy to the bereaved soul. So, the idea of 'Examination' is deliberately cancelled in Guru-Shishya Parampara. It is because the idea brings a note of limitation of time that is being imposed on the students as Devidayal writes:

"We learned one raga every two weeks and then rapidly moved on to the next. The curriculum was unabashedly devoid of nuances; the idea was to build a repertoire, which would culminate in an examination and a certificate. This was Indian Classical Music. My Mother slowly caught on that this was not the place for me. She wanted me to learn music from a teacher who would devote time to me exclusively, to teach me the fundamentals of voice culture, coax the notes out gradually, and instill depth in each utterance." (Devidayal, *The Music Room*, p. 13).

Classical maestros take time to teach each and every microscopic element as they believe in developing perfection till the students get it and master over it. That is why to be a classical musician is a journey of discipline, patience, and obviously a better luck to get a proper Guru. And this is the point where the narrative begins and we meet little Devidayal with her Guru Dhondutai. Ms. Devidayal's mother was instrumental in understanding the importance of a Guru in the Classical system, and that is why she cut Devidayal's lessons at the Gamdevi Music School, and took her to Dhondutai Kulkarni, the sole student of the legendary Kesarbai Kerkar of Jaipur Gharana. We find Devidayal writing: "Today, there is great deal of debate over why the teaching of Indian music cannot be transported into a western-style conservatory system which is not subject to the whims of any one teacher. In fact, a number of universities have tried to incorporate the ideas of classroom and curriculum into musical scholarship. But most have failed in turn out inspired musicians. It remains a world bound in mystifying tradition and irrational obsession." (57) So, one thing gets clear to us that why there is always a choice of supremacy regarding Guru-Shishya parampara over the music schools.

The two things are absolutely needed in case of learning Indian Classical – one is patience; and the other is disciplinary practice. One must give oneself the time so that they can develop themselves, and that exposure is only available in Guru-shishya parampara.

EXPLORING THE IDEA OF RAGA AND RASA

Indian Classical system believes in time-cycle and emotional relief. That is why it follows the rules of singing of a particular raga at a particular time as it would rouse the exact emotion if the compositions are sung properly. On going on defining the concept of 'Raga', Devidayal writes:

“A raga is a melodic framework or a defined set of notes- there have to be at least five- taken from the seven- note scale. It has a specific ascending and descending scale. There can be one or two dominant notes, to which the melody keeps returning. They are like the raga's spokesperson. That is the literal definition of a raga. It will get you past the university music exam and even perhaps secure you a radio audition... But there is an entirely different aspect to a raga...Raga's etymological roots are found in the word ranga, which means colour. A raga must evoke a color, an emotional reaction.” (32-33).

There is a deep link between a raga and human emotion which has been documented in the *Natyashastra*, one of the earlier texts on the performing arts. (Devidayal 33). Though the text is primarily attributed to Drama and Dance, but both the forms are inextricable linked with Music and Rhythm. Lakshminarayan Garg, an Indian Music Scholar is of the opinion that: “If the singing and the playing is done at the appropriate time, the music will have a very good effect on the listeners and will produce a fine *rasa-bhav* [emotional impact]”. (Garg, *Sangeet Visharad*, p. 102). *Rasa* emerges from the emotions as Sage Bharata exclaims: “*Rasa* arises from the conjunction of factors, reactions, and transitory emotions.” (Quoted in Pollock 50). On describing the *Rasa*, the great Sage remarks:

Rati Hāśascha Shokascha Krodhotsyā Bhayang Tathā
Jugupsa Bismayascheti Sthaibhāvā Prakīrtitā II (6.17).

(Pollock, *The Rasa Reader*, p. 50).

Bharata primarily mentioned eight 'Bhavas' [Emotions]- 'Rati' [Love], 'Hasya' [Mirth], 'Soka' [Sorrow], 'Krodha' [Anger], 'Utsaha' [Energy], 'Bhaya' [Terror], 'Jugupsa' [Disgust] and 'Vismaya' [Astonishment]. These eight bhavas respectively correspond to the eight 'Rasas' as Bharata remarks: “...the erotic [*Sringara Rasa*], comic [*Hasya Rasa*], tragic [*Karunyam Rasa*], violent [*Roudram Rasa*], heroic [*Veer Rasa*], fearful [*Bivatsam Rasa*], macabre [*Bhayankam Rasa*] and fantastic [*Advutam Rasa*] are the eight dramatic rasas. “ (Quoted in Pollock 50). The later Philosopher Abhinavagupta 16 (950-1016 AD) added the ninth *Rasa* along with the eight existing ones and named it as 'Shantam'. Pollock also mentions the colours which are associated with different rasas: “their colors: the erotic is blue-black, the comic is white, the tragic is gray, and the violent red, the heroic is golden, the fearful black, the macabre blue, and the fantastic yellow.” (Pollock, *The Rasa Reader*, p. 52).

The point can be elaborated with the help of *Ragamala* paintings. *Ragamala* Paintings are a form of Indian miniature paintings, a set of illustrative paintings of the *Ragamala*- the garland of ragas. They stand as a classic example of amalgamation of art, poetry and classical music in medieval India. They were painted mainly in between 16th and 17th century and divided into different schools according to the place where they were created. How the elements i.e. the ragas, the colours and the emotions are connected can be understood from one example. In the picture, one can see that a blue complexion boy [seem to be Lord Krishna] is dancing with his beloved and thus the colour blue in the clouds also evokes the sense of eroticism through the visualization. This is the painting of *Raag Meghmallara* [*Megh Malhar*], a raga of Monsoon. The two peacocks who are dancing at the background also prove that this is the exact visualisation of the raga that echoes the emotion of

romanticism of the monsoon. Walter Kaufmann depicts the painting in his *The Ragas of North India* (1968) that:

“MeghMalhar is a good, wise king. He dances well and enjoys the pleasures of life with gay abandon of a slightly dusky complexion with bright shining eyes...” (Kaufmann, *The Ragas of North India*, p. 396).

The use of black-blue in the painting reflects the erotic mood, and labelled the raga as one of the primary one belonging to Sringara-rasa. So, in a broader sense, the colours show the context in which the raga is composed. We see the same thing in case of Devidayal as well. Her use of putting ragas at different periods of her life time with Dhondutai, in a way, contextualizes the fact how the ragas are related to the moods and emotions. How they correspond to the traditional sense of aesthetics on which the compositions were heavily based upon.

In the chapter-one of the second part of the novel, Ayi, Dhondutai's mother died. And due to the shortage of money, she had to move from the flat situated at Shivaji Park. When she was about to move, she was facing a severe economic crisis. So, under the unfavourable circumstances, she had to sold Ayi's sofa-bed and wooden chair only for two hundred rupees. They were not just a basic equipment of a humdrum city life. To a woman like Dhondutai who has devoted everything for her little family, this brings a great pain to sold the possession that are associated with her mother's memories. At that point of her life, to sooth her pain, she took the tanpura and sang raga 'Sukhiya-Bilaval'. The contextualisation is very apt as Sukhiya-Bilaval is a raga of pain and separation. As the phrase suggests, 'Sukhiya' relates to something that is dry and rough [likely to be derived from the Hindi word 'Sukha']. And Bilaval in itself is a raga of pain.

Raga Bilaval is a morning raga and all its varieties are also sung during morning, preferably during the first prahar of the morning i.e. 6-9 am. In some scriptures it is portrayed as a ragini, and in some it is portrayed as a ragaputra. But today Bilaval is considered to be the Thata as well. The raga is named after the place Veraval, Gujarat (Delvoye 344). If one takes a close look on the picture, one will surely notice that, there is a sense of detachment. In earlier times, during wars, the husbands had to spend years in the battlefield, whereas the wives had to wait for their beloved. The picture shows that the wives are getting ready for their beloved, as they are doing sringar and checking themselves out in the mirror. Both the pictures thus, correspond to the emotion of detachment and that leads to the sense of pain. The point where Dhondutai sings Sukhiya Bilaval, proves the point that how she misses her mother. And that pain and agony leads her to sing this particular raga. It is generally believed that Bilaval in itself is the raga of sorrow. And the 'Sukhiya' again, emphasizes the same fact. This is a particular raga where the use of minor notes is forbidden. It is believed that if your love is pure, then your emotions must be true as well. So that is why, the major notes [Shudh] are used.

In chapter-6 of part-III, Dhondutai went to visit her guru Ustad Bhurji Khan who was severely ill. Khan Sahib had been suffering from severe anaemia and his kidneys are on the verge of collapsing. The situation became so serious, that due to a poor diet, he was becoming weak day by day. On that point, one day, Bhurji Khan asked Dhondutai to sing a composition, and without any hesitation and delay, she sang raga Basanti-Kedar. This is the second instance where her choice of raga is apt as Devidayal exclaims: “Dhondutai sang Basanti-Kedar with the gusto that is reserved for those one loves dearly. The composition was about springtime and new life, and it seemed to touch the cells in her ailing teacher's being, coaxing them to revive and multiply.” (183). Basant-Kedar is a hybrid of two distinct ragas- Basant and Kedar. Basant is a raga of Spring. As spring incarnates life and rejuvenation, it is believed that this particular raga arouses the same freshness and love that can cure anything. Dr Daljeet is of the opinion that: “Vasanta [Basant], as the name suggests is the melody of the spring season. It must have been one of the earliest seasonal melodies associated with the celebration of spring- the Vasanta Utsava where Krishna is worshipped as Kāmadeva- the god of love.” (Daljeet, *Ragamala*

Paintings, p. 151). This is evident in the Ragamala painting as well. It is a raga based on Marva or Poorvi thata and generally sung at the last quarter of the night of the spring season (Bandyopadhyay 364).

Kedar, on the other hand, is the raga of energy and devotion. It is generally believed that raga Kedar is another name of lord Shiva (Bandyopadhyay 16), who is the lord of Kaal [i.e. Time and Death]. So, naturally the compositions are dedicated to lord Shiva who has been worshipped as the destroyer of all evil [including diseases]. It is generally regarded that raga Kedar can produce a thermal energy through its melody. That is why it is also regarded as the ragini of raga Deepak (www.tanarang.com). The use of 'Ma' - Shudh Madhyam-gives the raga an atomic energy. So, the belief that Dhondutai had regarding her music, proves that why she was a sadhika and not a mere practitioner. From that day on, she visited her Guru for two more weeks, and somehow, Bhurji Khan revived from his illness. This example explores the musical feature of Jaipur Gharana. Mixed or Hybrid-Ragas which are called 'Jod-ragas', are particular contributions to music from this gharana as Arnob Roy remarks: "This style follows another quality of Jaipur-Atrauli Gharana, the use of Jod-Ragas. (Mixed or hybrid Raga; a blend of multiple Ragas that form one Raga)." (61).

The very point which I want to make clear is not only that how the contextualisation takes place, but also how Devidayal explores the idea of Raga- with its time theory, emotion and 'rang'. The mood that is reflected in colours in ragamala paintings, certainly explores how a particular raga is associated with a particular rasa. Similarly, the kind of poetry we witness in literature that ultimately becomes the basic form of a song; they also correspond to the human emotion and their lyrics mirrors the rasa.

VADI AND SAMAVADI

Arnob Roy and Dr. Joydeep Banerjee very rightly mention in their paper entitled: "Music as Narrative: Amit Chaudhuri's a Strange and Sublime Address and Namita Devidayal's The Music Room" that: "An attentive probe into the method of characterization would reveal that the Vadi-Samvadi structure of a Raga is maintained at various levels. If Dhondutai is considered as the 'sonant' note or Vadi note who remains dominant with her presence throughout the narrative, Namita is definitely the Samvadi note because without her presence most of the situation would have remained incomplete." (Roy, "Music as Narrative", p. 60). Vaadi-Samvadi are the prominent notes in any composition. Vaadi is the most sonant or most important note of a Raga as Peter Lavezzoli mentions in *The Dawn of Indian Music in the West* (2006): "There are always certain dominant notes that are the most important for each raga, and this dominant note is called the vadi, with the second most important note called samvadi." (22). Roy and Banerjee have not explored in the paper exactly how Dhondutai and Devidayal become Vadi-Samvadi for each other. But their point is clear to us that, as a Shishya is not complete without his Guru, similarly a Guru is neither complete without his shishya.

This idea of Vadi-Samvadi is important for another reason, as it emphasizes the point of 'Home' and 'Homecoming'. Devidayal had to leave India as she was admitted to Princeton University for her graduation. So, the sense of 'Home' and 'Host' has also been emphasized. Devidayal mentions in her narrative that while she was in Princeton, she used to practice music, but the people around her wouldn't recognize her activity as something celestial. She also mentioned that her American friends labeled her tanpura to be a 'Phallic symbol' and 'voodoo object' too. (126). Of course, she ignored the remarks, but in a way, her mentioning of the point again points out to the binary of Classical Culture vs. American culture. The idea of 'Identity' has also been emphasized. Though the term mass American culture was used against the British Classical culture, but it is applicable in this case as well. A practitioner like Devidayal who used to live with music and the memory of her Guru, bear with time and when she came back to the music classes again, the feeling and affection of Dhondutai made her realize more about the 'Home' and 'Host' binary.

CONCLUSION

There is a strict sense of devotion and practice which help the singer to develop his/her abilities. One can undoubtedly exclaim that there are more numbers of artists who are successful in their career only because they practiced in a disciplined way under a Guru-Shishya parampara. There is hardly any school [institute] that has produced a successful Classical singer. Similarly, we can also see how within a 310 page novel, Devidayal has craftily dealt with the subtle elements of Guru-Shishya lineage. She has also put emphasis on the fact that how a Guru differs from a School teacher, and how s/he helps the student to explore the sublime art not only through the subject, but through one's own self. Everyone can easily excel in performing arts, but in order to feel the divine; one must probe deeper into the art so that s/he can become one with the realization of the divinity. The sweet and gentle relationship that Devidayal and Dhondutai shared, proves the fact that how a Guru can be instrumental in bringing the best out of the student. There is another point which is very unique- that is why to put Devidayal in the first chapter. Throughout her narrative, Devidayal points out too many things about the Parampara, the musicality, the idea of Guru and so on. But, her narrative and stylistic representation didn't remain chronological. She deliberately tried to shift the time, space and action, so that the narrative becomes interesting and unique. This idea of zig-zag narrative is actually seen to be an Alapa [Alapa] as well. Alapa is the free flow of the raga, in which there are no fixed words, nor a fixed rhythm. It is the purest form of melody. Devidayal herself has said in an interview that: "The funny thing is that the structure of the book unwittingly ended up being like a khayal rendition— lovely detours which always come back to the sama or point of beginning in the tabla cycle." (Tiwari). So the whole narrative becomes a kind of Alapa to the discourse that Devidayal wants to set through her narrative i.e. the importance of Guru-Shishya Parampara in Indian Classical music. It is philosophical in nature as it explores how the philosophy of Indian Classical music is inextricably linked with Guru-shishya discipline. *The Music Room* (2007) in itself explores how the idea of discipline is important for excelling in music. It also explores that life is a linear story; rather, a space where each and every moment of life is dedicated to the realization of music.

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