

FROM DISCIPLE TO MAESTRO: THE MUSICAL JOURNEY OF PANDIT KRISHNA GUNDOPANT GINDE

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ABSTRACT

An influential figure in Hindustani classical music, Pandit Krishna Gundopant Ginde (1925–1994) was a renowned vocalist rooted in the Agra Gharana, a distinguished musicologist, a committed educator, a composer and a profound scholar. Due to his instinctual talent and early exposure to music, he received formal training from Pandit S.N. Ratanjankar, one of Pandit V.N. Bhatkhande's most eminent disciples. This close mentorship in Lucknow for over a decade shaped his deep understanding and mastery of a vast repertoire, encompassing various Hindustani classical music forms.

Beyond performance, Pandit Ginde significantly contributed to music education, serving at institutions like Bhatkhande Sangeet Vidyapeeth and Shree Vallabh Sangeetalaya. He was instrumental in curriculum development for music education across several universities. His perceptive music workshops and lecture-demonstrations were well known for their depth, lucidity, and pragmatic approach to comprehending the complexities of raags and their performance. He emphasized the crucial interplay between theoretical knowledge and practical mastery, leaving a lasting impact on Hindustani music pedagogy.

His unwavering devotion to his guru led him to establish the Acharya S.N. Ratanjankar Foundation, through which he diligently republished and preserved Ratanjankar's compositions and writings. While composing under the name 'Sujan Sut', Pandit Ginde prioritized the preservation and notation of existing musical treasures, including those of other prominent musicians. His multifaceted contributions as a performer, teacher, scholar, and preserver earned him numerous accolades and left an enduring legacy on Hindustani classical music which continue to inspire many generations of aspiring musicians.

Keywords: Pandit Krishna Gundopant Ginde, Hindustani Classical Music, Agra Gharana, Pandit S.N. Ratanjankar, Lecture Demonstration.

Introduction

Over the years, the finest artists from diverse traditions have contributed to the enrichment of Indian classical music. Since the 19th century, gharanas have helped the Khayal genre of North Indian classical music (also known as Hindustani classical music) expand and develop. Although there have been many gifted musicians from various gharanas, very few have also focused on research and educating the general public about this musical style in accordance with their gharana's traditions. These artists include the renowned singer and musicologist Pandit Krishna Gundopant Ginde, also known as Pandit K.G. Ginde.

He holds a distinguished place in the realm of Hindustani classical music, revered for his profound contributions as a vocalist, musicologist, teacher, and scholar. Deeply rooted in the Agra Gharana's traditions, his musical journey demonstrates a lifetime dedication to the preservation, propagation, and scholarly exploration of Hindustani classical music. Born into a culturally inclined family, his early training, association with legendary maestros, and his own intellectual rigor shaped him into an artist and academic of extraordinary stature.



Early Life and Family Background

The town of Bailhongal, located in the Belgaum district of modern-day Karnataka, is where Pandit K.G. Ginde was born on December 26, 1925. He came from a middle-class family and was the eighth of nine children. His father, Mr. Gundopant Ginde, was a licensed medical practitioner. Though a doctor by profession, Mr. Gundopant Ginde had a profound interest in Marathi Natya Sangeet and was an ardent admirer of Balgandharva, the legendary exponent of the genre. This musical inclination created an

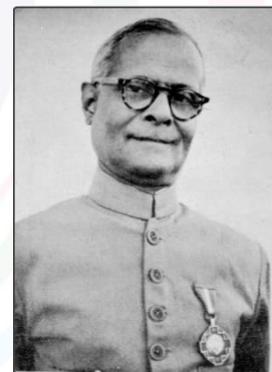
environment that nurtured young Pandit K.G. Ginde's exposure to and appreciation of music from an early age.¹

Music played an integral role in the Ginde household, where devotional gatherings were held every Thursday, featuring bhajans sung in Kannada and Marathi. These musical sessions involved family participation, with his eldest brother, Ramachandra Ginde, playing the Dilruba, and another brother, Govind Ginde, playing the tabla. From a tender age, Pandit K.G. Ginde was deeply immersed in these sessions. At just three years old, he was allowed to keep rhythm with the Jhanjh (hand cymbals), demonstrating an innate sense of taal. By the time he turned five, he had memorized and could fluently sing various Natyasangeet compositions and devotional bhajans. Young Pandit K.G. Ginde was also able to mimic the Maharashtrian renowned Khayal singer Ramakrishnabuwa Vaze (Vazebuwa) flawlessly after listening to his 78 RPM khayal recordings. His remarkable talent was acknowledged by his family, who had started to consider the possibility that he might develop into a skilled musician. His first full-fledged musical performance came at the age of six at a local festival, lasting nearly two hours, which showcased his prodigious talent and remarkable memory.²

Initiation into Formal Training

Recognizing Pandit Ginde's extraordinary aptitude for music, his eldest brother, Dr. Ram Ginde, who was both a neurosurgeon and a passionate music enthusiast, took it upon himself to nurture his talent. He was introduced to Pandit Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande, the revolutionary musicologist who is credited with the systematic documentation of Hindustani classical music, through Ram Ginde's interactions with renowned musicians. Pandit Bhatkhande observed the potential in young Pandit K.G. Ginde and strongly recommended that he be placed under the guidance of Pandit Shrikrishna Narayan Ratanjankar, one of his most eminent disciples and a close associate in the archival work that he had been involved in. Pandit Ratanjankar had also taken over as Principal of the Marris College of Music in Lucknow by that time.

Each summer vacation, Pandit Ratanjankar spent a few months in Bombay, where he practiced and taught every day. At the behest of Dr. Ram Ginde, young Pandit K.G. Ginde was taken to Bombay in the summer of 1936, where Pandit Ratanjankar heard him sing. Deeply impressed, he allowed him to participate in his daily riyaz and discussions. Observing his remarkable progress, Pandit Ratanjankar recognized his extraordinary potential and expressed his willingness to accept him as a disciple in the traditional Gurukul system.³ This required young Pandit K.G. Ginde to relocate to Lucknow and become part of his guru's household, where he would receive both musical and academic education. With the approval of his father, Mr. Gundopant Ginde, he eagerly embraced this opportunity. In September 1936, at the age of eleven, he moved to Lucknow and underwent rigorous training under Pandit Ratanjankar's guidance. His dedication and quick understanding of musical nuances soon established him as a distinguished disciple and a worthy successor to Annasaheb's musical tradition.



Pandit Shrikrishna
Narayan Ratanjankar
(Annasaheb).

Academic Pursuits and Advanced Training

Pandit K.G. Ginde had the rare privilege of being closely associated with the esteemed Pandit Shrikrishna Narayan Ratanjankar, also known as Annasaheb. From childhood, he lived in his household for nearly 15-16 years, immersing himself in its rich musical environment. Upon arriving in Lucknow in 1936, Pandit Ratanjankar arranged for his schooling while personally training him in music for about a year and a half. Later, Pandit Ginde joined Marris College of Music (now Bhatkhande Sangeet Sansthan). At that

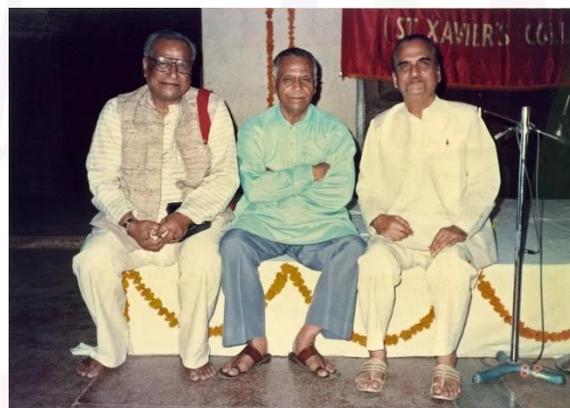
time, his daily routine was to take music lessons and practice from his Guru (Annasaheb) in the morning, go to school during the day and get music classes in the evening. Annasaheb and his wife, known for their gentle nature, cared for young Pandit Ginde with the same warmth and affection as their own son. As a Brahmin wife, Mrs. Ratanjankar avoided saying her husband's name and affectionately called young Ginde "Chhotoo", meaning 'the little one'. From then on, he was affectionately known as 'Chhotoo' or 'Chhotuba' among his close friends and associates.



Pandit S.N. Ratanjankar with Pandit K.G. Ginde. ⁴

Through this close association, Pandit Ginde absorbed the entirety of Pandit Ratanjankar's musical ideology and artistic vision. Such was the depth of his understanding that when he performed, it evoked the essence of Pandit Ratanjankar's own singing style. As a disciple of Annasaheb, Pandit Ginde mastered an extensive repertoire of over 2000 compositions across 250 raags. His training covered a wide spectrum of Hindustani classical forms, including Dhrupad, Dhamar, Khayal, Sadra, Lakshangeet, Chaturang, Tappa, and Tarana. He was unmatched in his ability to precisely recall intricate musical structures and retain compositions. He thoroughly studied Pandit Bhatkhande's Kramik Pustak Malika and absorbed Pandit Ratanjankar's prolific compositions, developing a profound understanding of both theory and performance. Pandit Kumar Gandharva, a dear childhood friend of Pandit K.G. Ginde always used to say, "If a bandish needs to be preserved, it should be given to 'Chhotoo' (Pandit K.G. Ginde). Even after several years, whenever asked, he would render it with the same grace, emotion, and artistic excellence at any moment." In that sense, he was not just an exceptional '*Gayak*' but also a '*Nayak*'.⁵

While studying at Marris College of Music, Pandit Ginde developed a deep bond with some of his peers who later went on to become huge names in Hindustani classical music like Pandit Dinkar Kaikini and Pandit S.C.R. Bhat.⁶ He further expanded his knowledge under the guidance of notable scholars and maestros, including Pandit S.C.R. Bhat and Pandit Natu. Additionally, his musical journey was enriched through mentorship from acclaimed artists such as Pandit Rajabhैया Poonchhwale and Pandit Vadilal Shivram.



(From left to right) Pandit K.G. Ginde, Pandit S.C.R. Bhat, Pandit Dinkar Kaikini.⁶

His academic journey culminated with the attainment of the prestigious Sangeet Nipun degree from Bhatkhande Sangeet Vidyapeeth, where he was awarded the Bhatkhande Gold Medal for his exceptional performance. Additionally, he was later honoured with a Doctor of Music degree by Shree Vallabh Sangeetalaya.⁷

The Sacred Guru-Shishya Bond and Selfless Guru-Seva

Pandit S.N. Ratanjankar was not only the foremost disciple of Pandit Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande but was also universally recognized as his true successor. Through his unwavering dedication to his guru, unrelenting efforts throughout his life, and exceptional talent, he conserved the extensive musical heritage of his guru, Pandit Bhatkhande. He dedicated his entire life to advancing his guru's unfinished work and nurturing the tradition to keep it alive. Similarly, his prime disciple and spiritual son, Pandit K.G. Ginde,

was the undisputed successor of Annasaheb. It was a rare fortune for Pandit Ginde to receive the closest association with his Guru, a privilege that few others ever had, as he lived in his Guru's house from his childhood for nearly 15 to 16 years. As a result, his unwavering devotion and steadfast faith in guru Pandit Ratanjankar, along with his absolute dedication to his musical education, enabled him to accumulate a glorious treasure of musical knowledge, making him a source of inspiration for all his fellow disciples.

Pandit Ratanjankar, a prolific composer, created around 700–800 bandishes of exceptional quality during his lifetime. Regardless of these compositions' complexity, subtlety, or depth, Pandit Ginde found them naturally accessible. It was Annasaheb's practice to quickly jot down his new bandish on a piece of paper and hand it first to Pandit Ginde. Upon briefly glancing at it, Pandit Ginde would immediately start singing it, capturing all its nuances and intricacies with ease. The responsibility of preparing the notation of bandishes was entrusted solely to him. As a result, he had a complete and precise recollection of all of Annasaheb's compositions, along with their exact pronunciation and nuances. In fact, this is how many of the compositions found in the '*Abhinav Geetmanjari*' were ultimately developed. Annasaheb regarded his beloved disciple, 'Chhotoo', as the living repository of his bandishes. Pandit Ginde was deeply and wholeheartedly immersed in the continuous stream of Annasaheb's musical thought and creative vision.⁸

Pandit K.G. Ginde dedicated his life to carrying on his guru, Pandit S.N. Ratanjankar's musical legacy. In 1985, on the occasion of Pandit Ginde's *Shashtiabdipoorti* (60th birthday), he along with some of his peers, established the Acharya S.N. Ratanjankar Foundation, dedicating almost the entire purse presented to him to its corpus. Through this foundation, he took on the task of publishing his guru's works and ensuring that future generations could benefit from his musical legacy. With unwavering dedication, he republished many of Pandit Ratanjankar's compositions, articles, and lectures that had gone out of print. His most significant contribution was the publication of the three-volume '*Abhinav Geetmanjari*', in which he personally hand wrote all compositions and their notations. Additionally, he recorded most of Annasaheb's compositions for the archives of the Sangeet Research Academy in Kolkata.⁹

Using the foundation as a platform, Pandit Ginde initiated a series of lecture demonstrations, fostering greater awareness and appreciation of Hindustani classical music. He strongly believed in making music accessible to the common man at affordable prices, which he ensured through the foundation's programs and the Sujaan Sangeet Samaroh. His efforts extended to publishing notable books like *Aesthetic Aspects of India's Musical Heritage* and *Acharya Shrikrishna Narayan Ratanjankar – Sujaan*. His archival recordings became invaluable contributions to institutions such as the Sangeet Research Academy (Kolkata), Uttar Pradesh Sangeet Natak Akademi, and the Central Sangeet Natak Akademi, solidifying his role as a key preserver of Hindustani classical music.

Teaching Career and Contributions to Hindustani Music Education

Pandit Ginde's contribution to music education was extensive. He began his teaching career as a faculty member at Bhatkhande Sangeet Vidyapeeth, where he served for eight years and trained numerous students in the Guru-Shishya parampara. In 1951, he was invited to join Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan's Sangeet Shikshapeeth in Bombay, where he was appointed as the Vice-Principal. Later, in 1961, he took charge as Principal of Shree Vallabh Sangeetalaya, Sion, Bombay, a position he held until his retirement.

His influence extended beyond institutional teaching. Being an academician by temperament and training, he contributed significantly to curriculum development and policy formation for music education in India. He served on the academic boards of Bombay University, Banaras Hindu University, Jodhpur University, and Indira Kala Sangeet Vishwavidyalaya. He was also frequently invited as the

visiting examiner for B.A., M.A. and Ph.D. level courses in music at institutions such as University of Delhi, Jodhpur University, Bhatkhande Sangeet Vidyapeeth and Akhil Bhartiya Gandharva Mahavidyalaya. Additionally, he was called upon to participate in various music conferences in the country and perform for the Akashvani and Doordarshan network.¹⁰

Pandit K.G. Ginde's contributions to Hindustani music extended far beyond his role as a professor and examiner at prestigious institutions. His insightful music workshops and lecture-demonstrations showcased his profound understanding of the art form, combining musical brilliance with exceptional oratory skills. Through these renowned sessions, he provided in-depth analyses of crucial musical concepts, highlighting his stature not only as a distinguished vocalist but also as an extraordinary guru and scholar. His lectures, known for their depth and clarity, remain an invaluable asset to the world of music. Particularly, his research on the intricacies of raags, with a special focus on 'swar lagaav' (the precise application of notes according to a raag), left a lasting impact on Hindustani music enthusiasts.

By focusing on proficiency over both theoretical and practical aspects, Pandit Ginde's method of explaining groups of raags went beyond theoretical discourse. He meticulously identified the shared elements within raag groups while distinguishing the unique characteristics of each raag, reflecting his introspective musical analysis. His ability to articulate these complexities in a practical, vocal form solidified his influence on Hindustani classical music education. To preserve and propagate the traditional teachings of Pandit Bhatkhande and Pandit Ratanjankar, most of his lecture-demonstrations were conducted under the Acharya S.N. Ratanjankar Foundation. These invaluable lectures have been preserved and published in the form of CDs by his son, Mr. Ajay Ginde, under 'Meera Music', ensuring their continued contribution to the world of music.

Performance Career

Pandit K.G. Ginde was a distinguished performer known for his command over various Hindustani classical music forms, including Khayal, Dhrupad, Dhamar, Tarana, etc. He had performed solo many times on the radio, as well as at some prominent music festivals, with notable success. His performances were extremely appreciated at esteemed platforms like Tansen Samaroh, Haridas Sangeet Sammelan, Guni Das Sangeet Sammelan, and Sur Singar Samshad. He was also a regular broadcaster for All India Radio (Akashvani Bombay) and appeared on various Doordarshan's Hindustani classical music programs. Duet performances by Pandit K.G. Ginde with his senior co-disciple and guru, Pandit S.C.R. Bhatt earned widespread acclaim for their artistic brilliance and musical depth. Their intricate performances of Khayal, Dhrupad, and Dhamar during *jugalbandi* recitals gained immense recognition for their aesthetic appeal and comprehensive exploration of rich traditions of Hindustani classical music.



Pandit K.G. Ginde performing Raag Gaud Malhar accompanied by Pandit Yogesh Samsi on the Tabla and Pandit Tulsidar Borkar on the Harmonium.¹¹



A duet performance by Pandit K.G. Ginde and Pandit S.C.R. Bhat.¹²

Pandit K.G. Ginde was a well-known scholar, teacher, and disciple, but he was also a highly regarded performer. He never limited himself to theoretical discussions but emphasized the importance of mastering the practical aspects of a raag as well. His deep understanding was always complemented by his ability to bring out the precise nuances of a raag through performance, showcasing his exceptional caliber as an artist.

Legacy and Final Years

Few people are aware of the various bandishes composed by Pandit K.G. Ginde. Under the pen name 'Sujan Sut', he composed several bandishes of Khayal, Tarana, Dhrupad, Dhamaar, and Raagmala. However, he was not particularly inclined toward composing, believing that the vast repertoire created by earlier masters was already sufficient. He often emphasized the importance of thoroughly assimilating existing compositions before creating new ones, which is why he did not compose in large numbers.¹³

There is no known record of Pandit Ginde performing his own compositions in concerts, except for one in 1987, when he presented a bandish in Raag Vibhas on the *Shashtiabdipoorthi* (60th birthday) of Pandit Dinkar Kaikini, whom he considered a younger brother. As a special gift for the occasion, he composed and performed this bandish.¹⁴

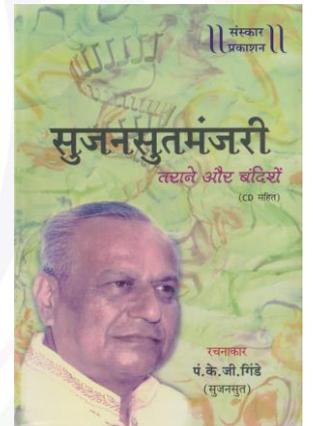
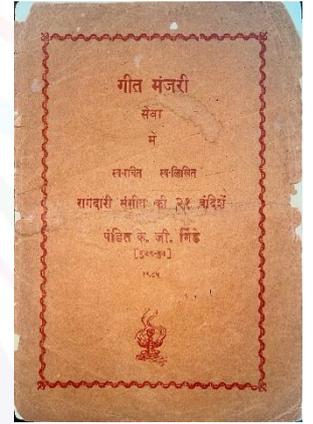
While Pandit K.G. Ginde never actively promoted his own compositions, at the persistent request of his peers and disciples, he meticulously documented 21 of them in his elegant handwriting on his own *Shashtiabdipoorthi* (1985), compiling them into a small booklet titled 'Geet-Manjari'.¹⁵

Through the dedicated efforts of Pandit K.G. Ginde's disciple, Pandit Yashwant Mahale, 30 of his compositions have been systematically preserved and compiled into a book titled 'Sujansutmanjari'. These compositions include bandishes of Khayal, Dhrupad, Dhamaar and Raagmala.

Just as Pandit K.G. Ginde's singing was intellectually enriching and emotionally fulfilling for all listeners, his elegantly crafted handwriting was equally captivating, especially in the precise and clear notation of bandishes which contributed significantly to the preservation of many bandishes. Beyond Pandit Ratanjankar's compositions, he notated and conserved works of several musicians. He had documented all the bandishes of Pandit Jagannath Buwa Purohit (*Gunidas*), Ustad Vilayat Hussain Khan (*Pranpiya*), as well as the compositions of Pandit C.R. Vyas, even making corrections that were acknowledged by Pandit Vyas. Similarly, he notated all compositions of Pandit Dinkar Kaikini, refining them where necessary with the composer's approval.¹⁶

Pandit Ginde's contributions were recognized with honours such as the Giants International Award for Music (1988), Sharangdev Fellowship Award (1990), Sangeet Natak Akademi Award (1990), and Maharashtra Gaurav Puraskar (1990). In recognition of his contributions to the propagation of music, he was given the title of "Sangeetacharya" at the Shreevallabh Shikshan Sangeet Ashram's silver jubilee.¹⁷

Several renowned musicians sought Pandit Ginde's guidance, including Pandit C.R. Vyas, Dr. Prabha Atre, and Pandit Jitendra Abhisheki. Among his prominent disciples were Pandit Yashwant Mahale, Pandit Sudhindra Bhaumik, Pandit Indudhar Nirody, Pandit Tushar Dutta, D Wood, etc. Pandit Ginde embodied all the qualities of Annasaheb, attracting many musicians seeking his guidance and musical



discussions with him. Pandit Bhimsen Joshi deeply admired him, saying, “He is the only musician who demonstrates what he says. These are the real musicians, we are merely musicians by luck”.¹⁸

Pandit Ginde expressed satisfaction, believing that the purpose of his life had been accomplished, when the Sujaan Sangeet Samaroha came to an end in 1994 with the Acharya S.N. Ratanjankar Foundation's final publication of Pandit Ratanjankar's works. It is poignant to note that just months later, on July 13, 1994, he passed away in Kolkata while discussing music at the Sangeet Research Academy; an end befitting a musician, musicologist, and guru devoted to his art. His monumental contributions to Hindustani classical music have had a lasting impact and continue to motivate upcoming generations of musicians and scholars.

As Thakur Jaidev Singh aptly stated in the ‘*Shashtiabdapoorthi Souvenir*’ of Pandit K.G. Ginde (1985), “All these years, Ginde has not lived for himself, but for music. He spared no pains in learning this divine art and in imparting it to others. He has been one of the brilliant products of the Bhatkhande Music College, Lucknow, and one of the brightest pupils of its great Principal, Dr. Ratanjankar”.¹⁹

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