

FAMILY LINEAGE OF PANDIT KEDAR BODAS AND HIS INITIAL LEARNING

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Abstract

This paper examines the early life and training of Pandit Kedar Narayan Bodas (1963-2023), an eminent Hindustani classical vocalist of a Gwalior gharana. Through the Guru-Shishya parampara, Kedar ji absorbed rigorous discipline, deep listening practices, and exposure to the nuances of khayal gayaki. Influenced by family traditions, anecdotes of great masters, and his grandfather's analytical approach to raga and bandish, he developed both technical mastery and an openness to diverse gharanas. These formative experiences laid the groundwork for his later synthesis of multiple khayal traditions into a distinctive style.

Keywords- Pt. Kedar Bodas, Bodas family Lineage, Pt. Narayan Bodas, Pt. Lakshman Bodas, Pt. Kedar's initial training from his grandfather.

Introduction:

Hindustani Classical Music has been referred to as an ocean by stalwarts and practitioners of this musical form. Attaining the entirety of this ocean is a mere impossibility and a vain pursuit. Often, artists claim that in their entire lifetime, they truly have only been able to deeply understand and do justice to about a dozen Ragas. While there often is a considerable degree of exaggeration in statements of this kind, the reason is only to make more apparent the vastness of this art form and the sheer level of dedication, study and for the lack of a better English word, Saadhana that goes into the practice and refinement of this music.

Each Gharana possesses its own musical philosophy, where understanding the depth of even one school may often be a quest of a lifetime. Pt. Kedar Narayan Bodas is an example of a musician who belonged to a musical family and received traditional Taleem in Gwalior gayaki owing to his family's lineage, but decided to go above and beyond and receive authentic Taleem from as many as different Gharanas as possible during the course of his musical life.

Pandit Kedar Narayan Bodas, an eminent artist belonging to the famous Gwalior gharana. He is famous for his unique style of khayal singing and always been a knowledge seeker throughout his life. Pandit ji was a torchbearer go beyond his traditional lineage style. As a result, he learnt 4 different gharana of khayal gayaki.

Pandit Kedar ji's Birth and his family lineage

Pandit Kedar Bodas was born on 22nd April, 1963 in Pune. He was born into a family where music dwelled in every nook and cranny. His father **Pandit Narayan Bodas** and his mother's name is **Shri Savita Bodas**. His father Pt. Narayan Bodas was a classical vocalist of an esteemed Gwalior gharana and equally known for his work as an actor. Pt. Narayan ji started working from the age of 17. He was more deeply engaged in Natya Sangeet than in regular singing pursuits, which led to limited time for providing tutelage to his son Pt. Kedar ji.

Kedar ji's mother, Smt. Savita Bodas, though not as serious a musician as his father, was a constant source of care and support throughout his life. She primarily managed the household responsibilities, ensuring a stable environment for the family. Alongside her duties, she continues to nurture her own creative side by writing poetry and, in later years, managing a saree business. At the beginning of her marriage, her musical sensibilities were shaped under the guidance of her father-in-law, Pandit Lakshman Rao Bodas, from whom she received training. While she did not pursue music professionally, her quiet strength and multifaceted talents deeply enriched the family's cultural fabric.

Instead, Kedar Ji learnt from his grandfather **Pandit Lakshman Rao Bodas**, who was a direct disciple of the great **Vishnu Digambar Paluskar**. Pandit Lakshmanrao Bodas and **Pt. Shankar Shripad Bodas** were brothers. Pt. Shankar Shripad Bodas also happens to be the father of **Vidushi Veena Sahastrabudde** and **Pt. Kashinath Bodas**. In other words, Veena Ji and Kashinath Ji were aunt and uncle to Kedar Ji. Pt. Lakshman ji played a very important role in the initial training of Pt. Kedar ji, and hence became the core of his childhood memory.



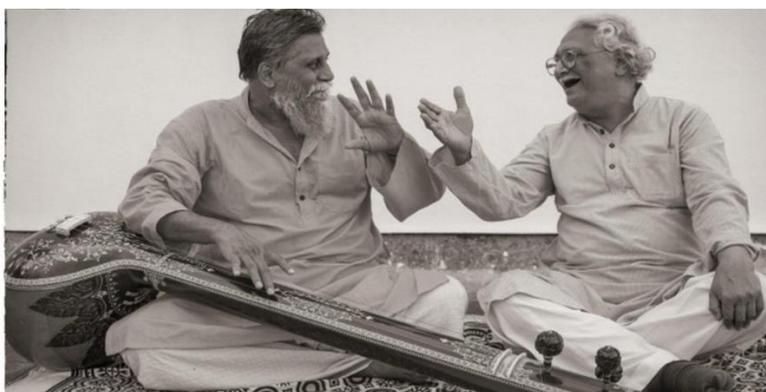
Pandit Anant Bodas, the table maestro, was the direct disciple of great Ustad Amir Hussain Khan, who later became the tabla guru of Kedar ji. It is said that Pandit Ji was more determined to learn the art of Tabla as compared to vocal singing. But over a certain maturity, he discovers an interest in khayal gayaki.

Beyond Pt. Kedar ji's own distinguished lineage, music also ran deep through his extended family. His paternal aunt's mother-in-law was the direct disciple of Ustad Vilayat Khan (*Pran piya*) of Agra gharana and her brother-in-law was the eminent Pt. Ashok Ranade, who became a major pillar in imparting musical insight to Pandit Ji.

Initial training from Pt. Lakshman rao Bodas

Pandit Kedar Bodas was born into a distinguished musical lineage. His father, Pandit Narayan Bodas, and his grandfather, Pandit Lakshman Bodas, were both revered musicians of their time. While Pandit Narayan Bodas was deeply accomplished, his commitments as an actor, often engaged in rehearsals and performances, left him with limited time to personally guide his son in music. Although Kedar ji had only limited opportunities to spend time with his father, there were memories that left a lasting impression on Kedar ji. Like, he would watch his father Narayan ji immersed in the rigorous practice of the main melody of Bandish in Agra Gharana style, which he had learnt for eighteen years. His father would simultaneously play the tanpura with his right hand and the dagga with his left hand, all while singing. Kedar ji vividly remembered watching this disciplined routine before his father would leave for the office.

Narayan ji was deeply influenced by the style of Ustad Mubarak Ali Khan, which had captivated him during his youth in Karachi when he was just fourteen years old. Kedar ji's father would often talk to Kedar ji about the time when he was in Karachi.



The photo of Pandit Kedar Bodas with his father Pandit Narayan Rao Bodas

Between 1925 and 1949, numerous eminent musicians would visit the residence of Pandit Lakshman Rao Bodas, where intimate baithaks were held. In these gatherings, artists not only performed but also engaged in profound discussions on music. Growing up in this vibrant cultural environment, Narayan ji absorbed immense knowledge simply by sitting among these scholars, listening attentively to their conversations and soulful renditions.

It was therefore Pandit Lakshman Bodas, Kedarji's grandfather, who took the responsibility of nurturing his musical training and laid the firm foundation on which his artistry was built. His grandfather had a rigorous talim from Pandit Vishnu Digambar Paluskar. Meanwhile, in this process,

Paluskar ji was also busy setting up branches of his very own institution, named "Gandharv Mahavidyalaya" in various parts of India, with assigning his own disciples to take charge of the respective branches of Gandharv Mahavidyalaya. Similarly, Pandit Lakshman Rao, at the age of 21, was assigned to look after the Karachi branch of Gandharv Mahavidyalaya.

In accordance with the requirements of his duty, Pt. Lakshman Ji, along with his wife, relocated to Karachi. Renowned as one of the finest artists of his time, he transcended the boundaries of musical knowledge. Beyond music, he was also a trained Kathak dancer, a painter, and an actor. The institution was well run by him till the subject of the partition of India- Pakistan came into existence. Unfortunately, Pt. Lakshman ji had to shut down the Gandharv Mahavidyalaya of Karachi and flew to India with his wife and two sons (Narayan Bodas ji and Shankar Bodas ji).

As the year passed by, they settled in Maharashtra, and his sons grew up under Pt. Lakshman ji's tutelage. Pt. Kedar ji had the privilege to be under the strict talim of his grandfather, i.e. Pt. Lakshman Bodas.

From six months to sixteen years of age, Pt. Kedar had learnt from his own grandfather in Guru-shishya Parampara. Pandit Kedar's musical sensibilities were instilled from infancy. At the age of just five to six months, his grandfather would sit him on

his lap and take the tanpura beside him. He used to play it for half an hour a day, which let him seep into the ocean of resonant tones of tanpura.

A few years older, when his consciousness evoked, Kedar Ji was given a lesson for knowing the importance of the tanpura in the musical journey. His grandfather, Pt. Lakshman Ji used to train Kedar Ji in the art of listening and identifying the notes. For instance, his grandfather used to sing a sargam phrase in Aakar, and Kedar ji was asked to describe the notes of that phrase taken simultaneously. In the beginning, Kedar ji often made mistakes in identifying the notes of a musical phrase when sung on different vowels.

Lakshman ji would often guide his young grandson by making him sing different notes on the sacred syllable “Ram”. Even during Kedar ji’s infancy, he would softly sing notes into the child’s ear, nurturing his musical sensibility from the very beginning. These deliberate gestures tended to be the earliest seeds of his training, instilling both devotion and a natural intimacy with sound. To guide him, his grandfather advised him to repeatedly sing the entire octave (saptak) in his mind and use that internal reference to locate the exact notes of the phrase.

Lakshman ji believed that in music practice (Riyaz), one often experiences a sense of laziness. Since this sadhana deals with patiently following the step-by-step instructions of the guru and also practising an endless number of times the same piece until mastering and controlling it well. Therefore, being one of the most challenging sadhanas for acquiring the finest musical art.

Pandit Vishnu Digambar Paluskar was a prime disciple of Pt. Balarkrishna Buwa Ichalkaranjkar, who was greatly responsible for the propagation and transmission of Gwalior Gayaki across Maharashtra. Pt.

Lakshman Rao Bodas also transmitted the same strain of Gwalior Gharana to his grandson Kedar ji. Pt. Kedar’s grandfather not only passed on his rich musical legacy to him but also shared inspiring anecdotes about some renowned artists such as Pandit Vishnu Digambar Paluskar, Bhaskar Buwa Bakhle, Ustad Faiyaz Khan, Balkrishna Buwa Ichalkaranjkar, and Ustad Vilayat Hussain khan.

His grandfather would also provide analytical explanations of how an artist rendered a particular raga and highlighted their unique style of presenting a bandish. For example, the vilambit khayal composition “ Baaje Jhanan” in raag Jaunpuri is traditionally sung at the upper octave (shadaj) with a descending meend towards komal Dhaivat, whereas Balkrishna Buwa sang the bandish at the lower octave of Shadaj.

Lakshman ji would often share his childhood experience and memories in the process of learning music from Pt. Vishnu Digambar Paluskar ji who was called as “Maharaj” by everyone. He would also narrate in detail how his guruji had learnt music, along with his distinctive style of singing and teaching.

In many interviews, Kedar ji often fondly spoke about his grandfather and recalled sharing with him some of the memorable conversations with Paluskar guruji. One of such anecdotes was shared by Kedar Ji in a recent interview. His grandfather, Pt. Lakshman ji once asked his guruji why he refrains from presenting his finest musical artistry before a general audience. To this, Paluskar guruji replied that while he certainly could present his highest musical prowess in a concert but the common audience would not be able to perceive its depth. Whereas this form can be preferred only in front of music scholars and performers. Therefore, he preferred to present a simpler and more accessible form of khayal singing. Because of his choice, people started assuming him to sing and know only a simple version of his gayaki but Paluskar ji (Maharaj) was above all such assumption and he followed the path which was righteous to spread this classical music nationwide.

By narrating such anecdotes to Kedar ji, his grandfather ensured that he never grew weary of repetitive practice. Instead, Kedar Ji gradually developed a deeper interest in learning compositions and exploring the nuances of khayal gayaki. He was made to listen to the tanpura for two hours at a stretch, through which he was able to discern the twelve notes beautifully embedded within this drone. Gradually, this process became so meditative for him that he could not notice the time passing by.

Kedar ji learnt around 20 to 25 ragas under the tutelage of his grandfather. Pandit Lakshman ji had a very unique style of teaching. He would first introduce the bandish of a particular raga in a simple and traditional format, and later would ask Kedar ji to sing the same bandish in different taals while maintaining the same compositional structure. This technique helped Kedar ji develop a deeper understanding of Laya and taal.

Lakshman ji knew how to play many instruments, and he would always play Tabla while teaching a composition, and Kedar ji would play tanpura. Kedar ji’s grandfather was associated with a charity club established by Pt. Bhaskar Buwa Bakhle. This club dealt with many classical music scholars and performers who would meet every Saturday and Sunday. Pt. Lakshman ji would attend regularly on weekends. The club would conduct a cultural programme periodically, where Kedar ji had rendered

the raag Ahir Bhairav. Years later, Kedar ji discovered an entry in his grandfather's personal diary where he was praising Kedar ji's performance.

Apart from training his grandson, Pandit Lakshman ji also guided numerous disciples who came to learn under his tutelage. Young Kedar ji would sit through all these teaching sessions, absorbing the lessons passively, which greatly enriched his musical understanding and expanded his repertoire.

His grandfather would initially make Kedar ji and also his other disciples imitate his singing style because he believed that in the beginning, one has to sing in a fixed or bound manner. The reason is that in the process of imitation, creativity gradually finds its own way, leading to the development of an individual style. Over time, this practice helps in cultivating originality. Just as children, when they grow up, begin to develop their own individuality, in the same way, this applies to singing as well.

Over time, he not only imbibed the musical knowledge but also internalised the values and discipline that his grandfather embodied. Following the path laid down by his revered mentor, Kedar ji upheld a set of non-negotiable principles in his own life. One such principle was his refusal to accept any fee or gifts from his disciples; a practice rooted in humility and selflessness. Like his grandfather, he remained deeply spiritual and devoted to Lord Rama, drawing strength and inspiration from this devotion. Thus, his legacy was shaped not only by his musical mastery but also by the ethical and spiritual ideals he inherited.

Conclusion

we can say that Pt. Lakshman ji was a great influential figure for Kedar Ji, who directed him to see beyond a certain style of khayal singing and wanted him to explore more forms of music, as well as encouraged him to learn a form of art. As a result, Pt. Kedar was ambitious and had a curious mind to reach as many compositions or music styles as possible. Pt. Kedar ji was fond of drawing and painting, where later on he found interest in discovering the link between the musical notes and colours.

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