

Venugandha

autobiography

by Pt. V. G. Karnad

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Salutations

My sincere salutations to:

मातृ देवो भव, पितृ देवो भव, आचार्य देवो भव, अतिथि देवो भव ।

Sri. Kuldevata Shanta Durga Devi and Sri. Mangesh,
All the Dharmagurus,
Mother Smt. Shantabai Karnad (nee Leelavati Bellare)
Father Mr. Karnad Ganeshsunder Rao (son of Karnad Venkat Rao),
Elder brothers Mr. Dayanand, Yeshvant (Vasant)
and Ramanand G. Karnad,
All my school teachers,
My Guru Pt. Pannalal Ghosh and his wife Smt. Parul Ghosh,
All planets, creatures, vegetation, without whom,
I would not have been able to place before you,
the following details of my life with my sincere Pranams.
Please bless me and forgive me if you note any lapses
and shortcomings in my writing,
since I have not written this to hurt anybody intentionally.

_Pt._ Pannalal Ghosh



गुरुर्ब्रह्मा गुरुविष्णुः गुरुर्देवो महेश्वरः ।
गुरुः साक्षत् परब्रह्म तस्मै श्रीगुरवे नमः ।।

I offer this entire work at the feet of my beloved Gurudev, Pt. Pannalal Ghosh

____ *Venkatsubrao (alias Narahari) Ganesh Karnad*

Venugandha

Autobiography by
V. G. Karnad

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- *The back cover page shows a cactus blooming out of a thorny base photographed by **Mr. Vishvas M. Kulkarni.** It represents the growth stages in the life of a person whose hardships during youth have yielded a fulfillment in the later phase of his life. It aptly depicts the life of Pt. V.G. Karnad, the foremost disciple of India's greatest flutist, late Pt. Pannalal Ghosh.*

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How it started

Way back in 1991-92, when I started receiving flute lessons from the maestro, Pt. V.G. Karnad, I sensed that he has a wealth of experience and a penetrative vision for guiding flute students. When he talks, it is like a cascade of rich experiences enriching listener's knowledge. I felt its need to be crystallized for the present and future generations of flute and music lovers, and hence started coaxing him to write an autobiography. Although my initial attempts in this direction were futile, at one particular sensitive and gullible moment I was successful in convincing him and he relented.

The work practically initiated sometime during late 2005 when he started penning down and recording down his thoughts. Earlier, during the late 90s, I had recorded his interviews to know his experiences with Pt. Pannalal Ghosh and these helped as a starting point. Thanks to his photogenic memory, a great volume of information consisting of his early life, anecdotes, old recordings of his recitals, photographs etc. could be collected. I continued jotting down the information on the computer for the initial 2-3 years.

This was, however, just the enthusiastic hot-start towards the goal. A daunting task of compiling this information was ahead of me. At this critical time, Dr. Anjali Bhagwat extended the helping hand and the project could be geared up. Indeed, it would have been impossible to complete this autobiography without her motivating and cheerful participation.

This autobiography is solely the work of my beloved Guru, Pt. V.G. Karnad and I offer my efforts to him as a "*Guru Dakshina*".

Dr. Vishvas M. Kulkarni
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Bombay – 400094, India.
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A few words

I met Pt. V. G. Karnad after his flute recital in the inaugural music program organised by 'Samvaad' in Anushaktinagar on 26 May, 2002. It was only in 2008 that Dr. Vishvas Kulkarni informed me about his autobiography work and suggested that I get involved. I readily agreed, not just because I could afford the time, (since I had just taken Voluntary Retirement from Service) but because I felt a connection with Guruji's passion for music. And as the work began, he became my 'Guruji' too. I realized I could gain insights into so many aspects of life people led in the early part of the 20th century, the music culture and student-teacher relationship (*Guru-Shishya Parampara*) that existed and flourished against all odds, about the stalwarts in Indian music through all the recounts by Guruji, that it has been a thoroughly enjoyable journey for me.

He refers to Pannababuji with such love, humility and total reverence, which only goes to say what a good a human being he is. He has a fantastic memory and can remember names of people he knew 50 years ago, places and even roads at the age of 85, which makes me feel intensely aware of the lack of it in myself! This association has enriched my life in many ways. I congratulate Guruji for completing the task he undertook with enthusiasm and wish him and his family a peaceful life ahead and hope more students gain from his teaching.

I am going to miss the informal and sometimes quite lengthy sessions at Dr. Vishvas Kulkarni's home; the timely supply of lemon tea, invariably accompanied by a welcoming smile by his wife Varsha; the interesting disruptions by his curious daughters Rewati and Sanika; and the inevitable disagreements and discussions with Dr. Vishvas while writing.

I salute Guruji with utmost sincerity.

Dr. Anjali Bhagwat
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Preface

It never occurred to me that I should write my autobiography, I didn't think my life was extraordinary. But I have been fortunate in finding a great Guru and his presence and teaching, helped in tuning my life. Dr. Vishwas Kulkarni, other students and some wellwishers expressed that if I did write my story, it would help the aspiring students and music lovers, to know how the quest for learning music could make one overcome all the hurdles of life and reach the stage of tranquility.

In saint Kabir's words,

चार दिन की जिंदगी और आना बेभरोसा
जनम के साथ लाया घाटे का धंदा ।
कहत कबीर सुनो भई साधो
इक दिन तो जाना है दूसरे के कंधा ।।

Since we come in this world empty handed and leave the same way, the only thing we leave behind is the goodwill that we have earned during our journey called life.

What I have written here is just what actually happened, in "as it happened" way. I have followed the principal of "Satyam Shivam Sundaram', and stated the facts alone, without exageration or dramatization. The idea was never to be judgemental or to hurt the sentiments of the people who were part of my life. Despite this, if I have hurt anyone, I apologise and assure that it has happened unintentionally.

I sincerely wish that the readers will find this effort useful in one way or the other.

- V.G. Karnad

Foreword

I had the pleasure of reading the manuscript of "*Venu Gandh*", the autobiography written by the well known flautist *Pt*. V.G. Karnad. Written in a simple and lucid style, it, indeed, is very gripping and makes interesting reading.

Details of his early childhood, his varied hobbies, and entry into a profession totally unconnected to music have been vividly described thereby engaging the undivided attention of the reader. The author's memory is fascinating. He tells us how he was attracted to flute and pursued it side by side with a career in a different field.

His devotion, dedication, affection and respect for his Gurudev, the legendary *Pt*. Pannalal Ghosh is phenomenal and he stands as an ideal role model for all students of music in this respect. The detailed description for the students to reproduce that style of flute playing would, no doubt, be of great benefit for students of flute.

I am quite sure that this book would be of great interest to music students and connoisseurs as well. It is indeed a laudable effort.

Padmabhushan **Dr. Smt. N. Rajam**

404, Springhill, Hiranandani Estate

Thane - 400607, Maharashtra, India.

Acknowledgements

'*Matru Devo Bhava*' - My mother who brought me into this wonderful world on 22nd September, 1925, and thereafter, took utmost care in my upbringing.

'*Pitru Devo Bhava*' - My father who brought me up with strict discipline and affection.

'*Acharya Devo Bhava*' - My eldest brother, Dayanand Anna, who was instrumental in bringing me to Bombay in February 1948 after my retrenchment in service, getting a job in the world famous British Company "The Imperial Tobacco Co. of India Ltd."

'*Gururdevo Bhav*' - Pt. Pannalal Ghosh, whom I owe my advanced musical training.

My wife, Meera - I am indeed very lucky to have Meera as my 'better half', my "Griha Lakshmi." Meera is a very contented soul. In the past 58 years of our marriage she never made any demands. She is indeed 'Meera' personified - singing devotional songs in lilting, soulful and sweet voice. It was her foresight and kindness that was instrumental in bringing my parents and unmarried sisters to Bombay and also getting them married.

My daughters, Nagaratna and Ameeta - Nagaratna Anand Bhatt, my eldest daughter, with whom we reside in Pune, is a homemaker. Her husband, Anand Bhatt, works for a Bank. Their daughter, Shruti, also works with a Bank. Our entire family is ardent devotee of Sri Satyasai Baba of Puttaparti. Nagaratna is an active volunteer in serving Sri Satyasai Baba with her sincere devotion, and works for Satyasai organization. She sings soulful bhajans and ardent ghazals. Ameeta Kishore Shirali, my youngest daughter, who resides at Andheri East, Bombay, is also a homemaker. Her husband, Kishore Shirali, is in the shipping line (off shore). They have a son, Shreesh, who is graduating in Arts. Ameeta too is a busy volunteer offering her sincere services at a medical centre of Shri. Dharmakshetra; the abode of Sri Satyasai Baba at Andheri (E) Bombay. She has also inherited the musical qualities from her parents. She is a top grade Bhajan Singer at Dharmakshetra having a mellifluous voice. Her sincere devotion towards the volunteer work at the medical centre, especially in the operation theatre of the eye clinic, has won

appreciation from all the well known doctors visiting the medical centre.

My niece, Geeta Nazare (nee Amladi) stayed with us for many years and is just like a daughter to me. She lost her father when she was a baby. And when my wife went to visit her mother, this three year old just hugged my wife and said “I will stay with you alone”. And together we embraced her decision and welcomed her as part of our family. She lived with us until her graduation, job and marriage; in fact we gave her away (“Kanyadan”). Now she is comfortably settled working in LIC where she holds a responsible position.

I express a deep sense of my gratitude to -

Shri. Mohan D. Nadkarni : I consider him my first Guru in music. It was he who taught me the initial lessons in music. He very affectionately groomed me into becoming a good musician. He was instrumental in forming Shri Pannalal Ghosh Memorial Committee. He has now migrated to New Zealand to join his son and his family.

Late Shri. Girish Patel : A neighbour who became a great friend. Girishbhai was an architect from Gujarat. He prepared musical instruments out of wood e.g. Tanpuri, Sitar, Sarod, etc. He was, thus, close to many musicians and always made it a point to bring them to our house and introduce them to me. A voracious reader, who was always helpful.

Dr. Vishvas and Varsha Kulkarni : I met Vishvas in 1991-92. He started learning music from me since then. I attended his wedding on 23rd December, 1994, at Nandurbar. He has been of tremendous help to me in writing this book. This couple has been very kind to accommodate me while compiling all the details of this book from time to time. Varsha is a post graduate in science. She has taken such good care of me that she seems more like a daughter to me.

Dr. Mrs. Anjali Bhagwat : Though a colleague and good friend of Vishvas, she has helped me in compiling this book, right from typing to editing.

Dr. Smt. N. Rajam : For her valuable suggestions and kindly writing the “Foreword” to my autobiography.

Mr. J.N. Chavan : One of the oldest student of Shri Pannalal Ghosh Memorial School, he was the first to show tremendous interest in assisting me in publishing this book.

Dr. Hemant Junnarkar : He agreed to critically read this manuscript and make some positive contributions.

Ms. Padmaja Punde : Also went through the manuscript and gave her editorial remarks.

I am also extremely thankful to all the persons listed below for helping me at different levels.

Associates in the past : Late Pt. Devendra Murdeshwar, Late Mr. Mohan D. Nadkarni (flautist), Mr. Naresh Kumta, Late Mr. Prabhakar Nachane, Dr. Mrs. Lalitha Rao, Late Dr. Chandrakant Joshi, Late Mr. K.D. Desai, Mr. Nityanand Haldipur, Late Mr. Vijay Kabinittal, Mr. Ravi Samant and Mr. Vijay G. Kulkarni.

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Friends at Anushaktinagar, Bombay : Dr. Rama Rao and Smt. Uma Rao, Shri. Vijaykumar K. Savarkar, Shri. Alhad G. Apte, Dr. Suresh G. Bhagwat, Dr. Haladhar D. Sarma, Dr. P. Venubabu, Shri. Vijay P. Raul, Dr. Jagannath Gupta, Shri. Kumar Krishnamurthy and Dr. Smt. Rama Kumar, Shri. Ravi R. Sahaya, Dr. Vasudev Siruguri, Shri. G. Prabhakar, Smt. Vidya B. Mahale, Shri. Nikhil Narkhede, Shri. Ajay Janardanan and Shri. Harshvardhan Vyas.

Thanks are also due to all the affectionate friends and relatives who played an important role to give shape to my life so far. I pray to the almighty for their well being.

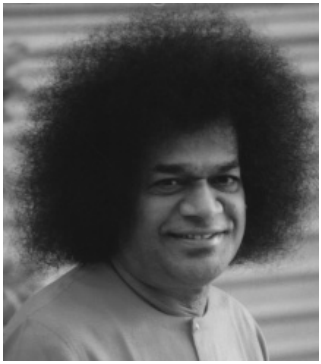
__Venkatsubrao (alias Narahari) Ganesh Karnad



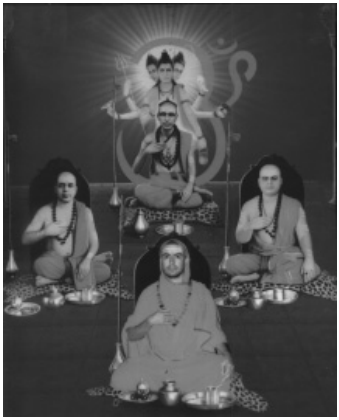
Shri Ganapati



Shri Shantadurga



Shri Satya Saibaba (of Puttaparti)



Swami Sri Sadyojat
Shankarashram
with Swami Pandurangashrm,
Swami Anandshram and
Swami Parijnanashram (III)



Swami Sri Ramdasji (Pappaji)
Mataji Krishnabai of
Anandashram Kanhangad



1.
A short season of childhood

Childhood is a short season.
~Helen Hayes

Beginnings

Let me begin my story by saying "*Jai Guru*" which has become my habitual way of greeting. I was born on 22nd September, 1925 at Kontupalke, Guruvayanakere, in a family having a religious and ritualistic way of life. My father, Mr. Ganesh Sunder Rao was a village officer and belonged to the lineage of late Mr. Karnad Sadashiva Rao, the doyen of our Karnad family and a staunch Congressman during mid-nineteenth century. Later he became popularly known as "Karnataka Gandhi" and the stalwart politicians such as Mahatma Gandhi, Motilal Nehru, Jawaharlal Nehru, Frontier Gandhi (Khan Abdul Gafar Khan), Babu Rajendra Prasad and many more used to visit my grand-father Karnad Sadashiva Rao's home.

My father was a very social and hospitable person, respected by villagers; and my mother was a true Indian housewife. My father was also the president of "Village Panchayat Board" and an active member of Congress party. One of the objectives of the Congress activities was to popularize Hindi in South India, and therefore in our village there were Hindi classes conducted by Pt. Laxman Dev Vidyarthi from UP. This activity was under the guidance of "Daxin Bharat Hindi Prachar Sabha". Some of the pleasant memories of my childhood are that out of 2 weekly classes, one used to be held at our home, and I remember having

learnt the Devnagari alphabets at the age of five, while sitting by the side of my mother. Our family included ten persons including the two brothers who died. So finally, we were four brothers and four sisters. Many cousins were also under my father's care at different times.

We hail from a remote Karnad village in Mangalore district. My great grandfather, Karnad Devappayya, lived there in an ancestral house in Kotekeri (for 'Fort street'), Mulki. We were a comfortably settled middle class family. He had two sons, Venkat Rao and Laxman Rao and two daughters. One daughter was married into Yerdoorkar family, and the other daughter was married into Heblekar family.

Venkat Rao had to migrate to Guruvayankere to look after his sister who lost her husband. Laxman Rao had to migrate to join his son who had settled in Madras.

We were about 15 family members, including cousins and relatives, who grew up together in Guruvayanakare from 1910 to 1942. Our upbringing was strict, religious, and we were brought up in a God fearing atmosphere.

Our daily routine would be getting up in the morning at about 6 am, schooling in the daytime, prayers and studies in the evening, have dinner at about 8.30 p.m. and go to bed at around 9 p.m. Tea or coffee used to be served only for the elders, certainly not for the children. In general, the daily schedule used to be followed with a strict discipline, and being disrespectful towards the elders was out of question.

When I had just completed seventeen years of age my father sent me to Mulki to study and also to maintain our ancestral house. Here, my grandfather, Karnad Rama Rao, was staying in the main house with his family which comprised of his wife; Smt. Uma Pachchi, his daughter in law (wife of the late Karnad Shiva Rao, who expired in May 1938 in Mangalore) and her children - Lalita, Vasant, Hema and Prema. The outhouse was occupied by Mr. Vasudeva Rao, the Head Master of the Higher Elementary School, with his family. After they left Mulki on transfer, my parents along with my sisters came to Mulki from Guruvayunkere. We stayed in the outhouse till the death of my grandfather after which his family was taken to Udupi by his surviving son Amrit Bappa.

I was adventurous by nature. I still remember some of the mischievous episodes. On one occasion, I had to walk to the neighboring village to visit a relative in the rainy season. I was accompanied by two of my sisters. We had to cross a small river on the way. While crossing it, all of a sudden the water level started rising and we were trapped mid-way. Although we were tightly holding each other's hands, my sisters were struggling hard to keep their balance. We could reach the other bank with great effort and were completely soaked. It could have easily been a life or death scenario. We got a good scolding from our relative for taking such a deadly risk.

Another time I wanted to try climbing a coconut tree without the usual support of ropes. But after climbing half the way I lost grip and came sliding down all the way bruising my chest badly, and for this I was rewarded with very good beating at home!

In May 1939 Ramanand, my elder brother, and I had our thread ceremony (*Upanayan*) on the same day, at the same *Muhurtam*. Ramanand was given *Brahmopadesha* by my parents while I was solemnized by my maternal uncle Karambar Shridharmam and his wife. Shridharmam was considered the best person to give *Brahmopadesham* to me as he was married to my favourite cousin Sumana Bai to whom I was very close since she used to live with us and was the only elder sister to me in our household.

My primary school education upto 5th standard was in Guruvayankere from 1930 – 34. The secondary school education from 6-8th standards from 1935 – 38 was in Beltangady. The high school education upto 11th standard was at Puttur during 1939 – 42, including the year I could not attend school due to severe jaundice.

Health disruptions

Those days, the only medical facility available was a local hospital three miles away from Guruvayanakere. An antibiotic was yet to be discovered and at such a time I and my brother had severe typhoid. The doctor used to visit every day on a bicycle to see our condition and give necessary instructions for nursing, since that was the only treatment known along with diet control and practicing good hygiene. I had my second severe illness of jaundice when I was 14 during my schooling at Puttur. The

jaundice recurred next year, this time it was much more severe. I became so weak that I had to miss my school for 2 months.

Next major health problem I had was after I started flute training under Pannababuji. I had a prolonged attack of stomatitis with ulcers in my mouth which was quite bothersome for my flute practice. Later when I got transferred to Bombay from Delhi I suffered from neck-spondylitis and had to wear the neck belt continuously. On advice of a friend from Nasik, Mr. Manilal Jethalal, who was expert in yoga, I went to Nasik for 10 days. The practice of *Matsyasan* under his supervision could cure my neck-spondylitis completely and I could throw away the belt after 10 days.

In 2006, I had a mild stroke that affected my right side. I believe that the Satya Saibaba's *vibhuti* applied promptly on my face, right hand and tongue saved me. Later on, medical tests showed that there was a small blood clot in the centre of my brain which could be treated by internal medicine without hospitalisation. Due to God's grace I have survived all these health problems and the only problem I face today is occasional hiccups due to acidity.

Moral lessons

A few moral lessons of childhood that I remember clearly even today had a great influence on making what I am today. Once, while returning from school barefoot I found a silver coin and happily picked it up. I proudly showed my prize to mother and I got my first lesson in ethics from her. She affectionately explained to me that the coin was not my reward from god. It was lying there because somebody had dropped it by accident and must be feeling very bad about his loss. She told me to go and put it back where I found it, so that if the person came searching for it he would feel very happy to get it back. I kept the coin back as told by her. She assured me that this would surely earn me a blessing from god.

One fine afternoon I returned home and burst out crying the moment I saw my mother. She held me close and enquired why I was crying. I told her that the teacher had beaten me. She asked me where and I pulled up my shirt to show the marks on my back. After knowing that the punishment was for not

completing my homework, she scolded me for not following teacher's instructions and gave a couple of slaps on top. This was followed by a strict warning to follow the teacher's orders and never come home complaining about any disciplinary action. It was a lifetime's lesson for me.

Another memorable lesson I had from my father was when I complained to him about a fight with friends and demanded that they should be punished. My father took a ball and asked me to hit it on the wall in front of me at 3 ft. The ball bounced back, much beyond 6 ft. He explained that if I harmed anybody, it would boomerang on me with double the force, in the same way.

On another occasion, our teacher asked the class, "What would you do if you found a stone in your path". We said that we would remove it from the path. The teacher asked why? And we said, so that it would not hurt other people passing that way. Teacher said yes, but more importantly it should not hurt you on your return journey. The lesson was that first one should take care of oneself and then you will be able to take care of others.

The strict discipline and ethical training from my parents, other elders and teachers during childhood indeed had a significant bearing on the rest of my life. It gave me a lot of strength and courage to boldly face all the hassles of life till today.

✦✦✦



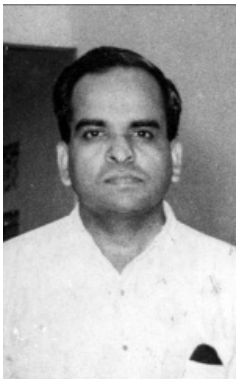
My paternal grand-parents -
Shri. Venkatrao and Smt. Kalyanibai



My parents – Shri. Karnad Ganesh
Sunder Rao and Smt. Shantabai



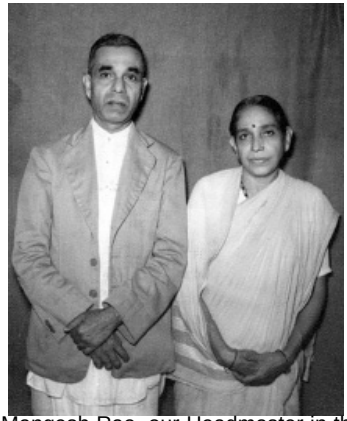
Our family of 7 without Dayanand-our first photo
taken by S.L. Hemmady in early 1930s



Dayanand
in 1952



Family portrait taken in 1950.
Vasant, Ramanand, me and Dayanand are
standing behind Vatsala (Vasant's wife) with
son Gowrish, mother Shantabai, Durga and
Sharada (Dayanand's daughter and wife)



Mangesh Rao, our Headmaster in the
school and his wife Smt. Ramabai



2.
Hobbies

A honeybee goes from flower to flower and is not concerned with the outside world. Irrespective of its' colour and form, its' passion is just to collect the nectar. My nature is similar. Throughout my life I cherished different hobbies and enjoyed great pleasure from them. Here I wish to narrate some of them.

Preparing stamps (like rubber stamps): A thorn from Triphal tree was picked and it's base was polished by rubbing on a stone. A line drawing of Gods (Krishna, Ganpati), Shivaji Maharaj etc was then placed on the flat surface and pressed hard so that the ink got transferred on it as a mirror image. Then with the help of a very fine chisel the blank portion was engraved. When this surface was pressed on a stamp pad and stamped on a plain paper the original image got printed.

Making cinema slides for advertisements: While in Mulki touring talkies would come and show cinema. A few local shop owners wanted the advertisements of their shops on the cinema screen. I found out a way to prepare these slides using a crude method. I took two transparent glass pieces and painted one piece with Indian ink. After the ink got dried I would scratch it with a sharp pin to write letters of the advertisement on it. Then I would place a coloured gelatin paper (from the Agarbatti boxes!) on these letters and place another glass piece on it. All the four sides would be stuck together with the help of sticking tape and this worked as a perfect slide to project on screen! I would charge

two Rupees for making a slide of which one Rupee was my labour charge. I must have earned at least three rupees per month those days which was enough to buy 24 plates of idli with sambar and coffee!

Painting of sign boards: Due to my interest in fine arts I tried my hands in painting sign boards for the shops, hotels etc with oil paints/enamel paints. I could earn Rupees five to ten per board.

The musical instruments I tried in childhood

One instrument I experimented on was an *Ektaari*. Folk artists in those days used to visit our village. They would play music at every doorstep and received a few coins in return. They used to sing along with an *Ektaari* which fascinated me. Those days the nearest place where musical instruments were available was Mangalore, which was 35 miles away from Guruvayanakere. So I tried making the *Ektaari* by myself. I got a yard of copper wire, tied it to a piece of bamboo, fixed two coconut shells on both sides and tried to produce different notes from different lengths of the wire by plucking it with keys.

Apart from playing flute I had an opportunity to learn harmonium by sheer luck. Sometime in 1934 or 35, my father participated in a raffle held by Vas Company, a watch dealer at Mangalore, by paying one rupee every month for a year. His luck favoured in the sixth month, and he won a single reed harmonium. When it was brought home, I was quite excited and hoped to get a chance to play it. Since boys were barred from learning music, however, this was not to be.

The girls were lucky in this regard. They were encouraged to learn music in order to improve their qualification for getting good alliances from cultured families. Thus, my younger sister Chandrakala, was encouraged to learn to play harmonium. My father engaged Mr. Venkatesh Pai, who had just returned from Bombay, to teach music to her. I had no chance of taking lessons, so I used to sit nearby and carefully observe how he used his fingers on the keyboard. After my sister's class, I would pester my mother to allow me to play it for a short while. She usually relented and permitted me to play for 10-15 minutes. My practice used to be during the day, in my father's absence. I used this opportunity to learn to play some tunes on the harmonium.

One day a *Keertankar*, Mr. Kallianpur Sanjeeva Rao came to Guruvayanakere and stayed with us as usual. Whenever he visited us, my father used to arrange a *Keertan* in the night in our Guruvayanakere Elementary School. About 50 to 100 people used to enjoy it. A person was usually sent to a village about 4-5 miles away, to fetch Mr. Karambar Prabhakar Rao who was a very good harmonium player, having played the organ for a number of dramas. That particular day, he was not available. Therefore Sanjeevmam was a bit disappointed as he would have to sing without the harmonium accompaniment. *Tabla* accompaniment was to be given by Mr. Ganpat Baliga of Beltangady who was a cycle shop owner. That afternoon Sanjeevmam was selecting some *Bhajan*s and compositions to sing at night and wanted some practice with harmonium. He asked me to play *Shadja* drone and started singing the *Bhajans*. After a couple of *Bhajan*s, I mustered enough courage and requested him, if I could try my hand on the harmonium to accompany him. He readily agreed and after a short practice appreciated my flawless accompaniment. He was impressed about my progress at such a young age. When my father returned from his evening stroll, Sanjeevamam gladly told him that the problem of harmonium accompaniment was sorted out. My father was quite surprised to know that I was the substitute player. He asked me to demonstrate in his presence and now I came under great stress, since I had learnt to play the harmonium behind his back, against the family tradition. He was pleasantly surprised and granted me the permission to give accompaniment. That night the *Keertan* programme accompanied on the harmonium by a boy aged 12 was very well received.

Dramas

Those days, we seldom had a chance to attend good dramas for want of a proper auditorium. All that we used to enjoy was field dramas, *Yakshagana*, *Jatras* in temples, *Kolam* in *Daivagudis* etc. Because of proximity to Malabar (now Kerala), these folk dances were based on Kathakali and music was Carnatic styled. Once in a year or once in two years, a silent film company used to come and show short films on bi-scope. Occasionally, some touring circus visited us which used to be a great draw.

I used to participate in almost all the dramas irrespective of the character that I was given. In 1947, when I was about 21 years old, we were in Mulki and were eager to celebrate the Independence Day. Mr. Kulyadi Madhav Pai translated the well known Marathi Drama "*Ekach Pyala*" written by the late Ram Ganesh Gadkari into Kannada. All of us were very keen to act in that drama. I was given the main role of 'Sudhakar'. The songs were in Marathi and the prose was in Kannada. The drama was enacted in the local Higher Elementary School's Manorama Hall. The audience had a loud applause for all the artists for a grand performance. My mother witnessed my acting as she sat in the first row and got upset to see me in the tragic role of a drunkard. In Bombay too, I used to be very active and took interest in Konkani dramas. I had befriended all the stalwarts of Konkani drama.

In December 1952, during our Swamiji's visit, we planned to stage a drama specially written by Mr. Mudur Prabhakar Rao, in Konkani. The story was based on the life of a great Saraswat saint 'Sant Appayya'. I was given the lead role of Sant Appayya and Dayanand, played the role of Mr. Chandayya Hegde of Sri. Kshetra Dharmasthal. The drama was very well received as it was played in the presence of our Dharmaguru Anandashram Swamiji. During this period, I vowed to Pannababuji that I will not eat any non-vegetarian food because I was to play a role of a saint in the drama to be presented before our Swamiji. He appreciated my decision and complied with my request.

Photography

During my bachelor days, I used to join the parties for picnics. In these parties, a few friends used to bring their cameras. I took a little interest in handling the camera which was owned by my colleague. The camera was Agfa Billirecord, a bellowed camera with 4.5 lense. When I visited my native place in 1952 for the wedding of my younger sister, I borrowed this camera from my colleague. I used a panchromatic film with it, which was newly introduced by Agfa. The night before the wedding ceremony the bride's hair was beautifully decorated with jasmine flowers. I wanted to capture it on the camera, the film being panchromatic, could be exposed in the artificial light. As there were no electric lights in the *Pandal*, I had to use the *Petromax* light for a long

exposure, using a stool and books on top of it to serve as a tripod. On my return to Bombay when the film was developed I was thrilled to see the results which ultimately inspired me to take up to photography as a serious hobby.

My uncle Mr. Kowshik Venugopal was a camera mechanic with Agfa at Chougule's shop. He helped me in developing this hobby by providing me with various types of cameras that used to come to him for repairs. This gave me an experience to handle different camera makes. One day he asked me whether I was keen to buy a camera. When I showed interest, he got me a camera which was being disposed by his German boss since he was winding up from India. The camera was Wightelander with Heliar lens 3.5 and was not fully automatic. I used this camera for a couple of years. Those days, magnesium bulbs were used for the flash light. I used to get requests for doing indoor photography covering various social functions, where the parties concerned would bear the expenditure and I would gain the experience.

My next camera was a German made Rolleicord V, which had a twin lens reflex. Mr. B. L. Sakhuja, my boss, asked me one day if I could suggest a good camera for his son who wanted to learn photography. I suggested a camera which was semi-professional. Mr. Sakhuja placed his order with a contact and by some misunderstanding two such cameras arrived, one from Aden and the other from Hongkong. He purchased one for his son and asked me if I was interested in purchasing the other one, since he was aware of my keen interest in photography. I had to decline his offer due to financial crunch. He suggested an alternative, that he would pay in advance for the camera and I could repay him once I got the bonus which was due in a couple of months.

I got my first photography job with this camera when my Marketing Officer, Mr. Malthouse, a Scotchman, gave me an order for taking colour transparencies on Kodak's Ektachrome film, of all the cut-outs, hoardings, wall sites and show-windows displaying ITC's products. I charged them Rs. 13 for each slide, which was Rs. 12 less, than what a professional photographer charged those days. I had to put in a lot of effort by visiting the sites, around 300, before and after my office hours without affecting my office duties. I had to wake up at 4 in the morning,

reach the sites at appropriate natural light condition to expose the film. Similarly some window shots had to be taken only at nights, with the help of flash bulbs. For all this, heavy road traffic and pedestrians had to be avoided, so my job was done at odd hours. When I finished the job and handed over the slides to Mr. Malthouse, he showed them to my boss Mr. Tipton (District Manager) who was very happy with the results. After knowing the cost I had charged he sent for me and enquired as to how I charged Rs. 13.0 per slide when the actual cost would be much less. That is when I came to know that Mr. Tipton owned a Rolleiflex camera and could estimate the actual cost per slide. Once I explained my hard work in terms of labour and time spent on the job, without affecting my office time, he was satisfied. Thus I recovered the cost of the camera of over Rs. 300.00, within a short time.

When I went to Germany in 1960 with the cultural delegation for World Eucharistic Congress held in Munich, I got my third camera. We had to tour the whole rural area of Baveria for presenting this beautiful dance drama based on the life of Jesus Christ. After my last performance in Zaarbruchen I proceeded to Frankfurt and stayed there for the night. Next day I purchased my third camera, a Rollieflex Model T and a Grundig tape recorder. I purchased my fourth camera when I went to USA in 1982 for giving a concert series. This was a Canon AE1 SLR model with a wide angle and a telephoto lens along with a flashgun. Now I possess a Panasonic digital camera 7.2 MP which was gifted to me by my daughter on my 82nd birthday.

Apart from the above hobbies when posted at Ahmedabad, I met Mr. Prabhu who happened to be the founder of the Ahmedabad Rifle Association. On his suggestion I became a member of the Rifle Association and learnt rifle shooting at the age of 43 and also passed the final exam with flying colours. During my Ahmedabad stay I also learnt to drive a car at the insistence of my boss since I had the responsibility of public relations for the company.

I pursued hobbies which were unrelated to each other. However, I believe that this pursuit gave a boost to my creativity and ultimately enriched my flute learning activity.

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Shri Venugopal Kowshik, my father's cousin and a camera mechanic who helped in my hobby of photography



Sunset at Juhu beach-initial stage of hobby



A private dialogue between Ustad Amir Hussain Khan, Nikhil Ghosh and Ustad Ahmedjan Tirakhva



My sisters Hemlatha & Suneethy - Attempt to catch reflection in the pond behind our residence at Goregaon (late 1960s).



Group photograph during the interval, actor David at the rightmost standing.



During the concert



Ustad Vilayat Khan and Ustad Bismillah Khan in a close up. Photographed by me



Ustad Amir Hussain Khan demonstrating Tabla at Babuji's residence. Nikhil Ghosh is playing *Lahera*.



Meera doing Riyaaz



The unveiling of Babuji's portrait (painted by S.R. Badakere) by Ustad Amir Hussain Khan.



A group photo taken at Babuji's residence. Pannababuji, Mataji, Pt. Taranath Rao and Pt. Nikhil Ghosh are surrounded by students and admirers before he left for Delhi to join AIR (September 1956).



Babuji sharing his thoughts about his base flute with Mataji



Students sharing a light moment with Babuji (1956)



A solo Tabla recital by Ustad Alla Rakha at Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Mombay on 22-9-1956. Photographed by myself.



Pt. Ravishankar in a concert at Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay with Shri Shashi Bellare on the Tabla. Photographed by myself (1956).



Pt. Dinkar Kaikini performing at Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan on 22.9.1956 with Shri A.K. Bellare on the harmonium. Photographed by myself.



Two Tabla maestros – Ustaad Amir Hussain Khan and Pt. H. Taranath Rao - Photographed by me



3.

The sound that came out of a flute

"I just liked the sound that came out of a flute. I just loved it. It just initially attracted me and then I got hooked. It is a little different for a kid that age to become hooked on the flute. It's a difficult instrument to learn, but I didn't find it as difficult as I thought it would be."

- Laura Nunez

The *Sanskar* imbibed at an early age is believed to go a long way in building one's life. I feel it really came true in my case. My introduction to music was in early childhood when I used to listen to *Bhajan* and *Lawni* sung by my mother's aunt. These renditions were strongly influenced by Carnatic music. My father used to play Carnatic music on a small flute but did not have the formal training. He used to sit on an easy chair and play the flute. Somewhere along, this music must have sown the seeds of interest in my heart and mind. Initially I started singing *Bhajan* like my mother's aunt. My mother encouraged me and later even others started appreciating it.

My interest in music started growing with time. One of our relatives, Shridharmam had a box type gramophone of HMV make with hand winding mechanism. It was a great novelty those days. Luckily for us, he used to leave it in our house for months

together. Nobody other than my father or himself was allowed to touch it. Only when either of them was around we could listen to those 78 rpm discs. These included Master Dinanath, Ustad Abdul Karim Khan, Ustad Faiyaz Khan, Ustad Nissar Hussain Khan of Baroda, Gohar Baijaan etc. The collection of Carnatic music included a disc of flute music by Palladam Sanjeeva Rao, the doyen of Carnatic flute and several of Purandardas's collections. The collection also contained a few discs of light/ film music. My father periodically played them.

I was hardly seven or eight years of age when I heard the flute record by Palladam Sanjeeva Rao. The composition and the tone of the instrument had such a profound influence on me that I became eager to acquire one and to try my fingers on it. Those days, young boys were only supposed to concentrate on academics and learning instruments was strongly discouraged fearing their distraction from studies. Only singing *Bhajan* was permitted for boys. After playing the flute for 10-15 minutes my father used to quietly keep it under lock and key in a cupboard. Hence I could only notice that he used six fingers on it and blew from his mouth (side flute).

I have a funny memory – I and my cousin liked these songs from films. However, singing those loudly would be considered as a crime in our home. We discovered a way out of this problem. We quietly used to go to the bath hut in the afternoon, put our heads in the big copper vessels (used for boiling water), containing little leftover water, and sing inside with the help of two pebbles to produce the rhythm. This act was never noticed by any elders and we enjoyed the music as if it was coming from the box type gramophone.

I distinctly remember a tribe known as "Halwakki" who were fortune tellers and would predict future with the background of beats on a small drum. Those folk artists used to visit in different seasons and sing many folk songs. Out of those, I can remember only one song in Kannada. Earlier, all the artists were patronized by Kings and *Zamindar*s who would pay them alms or remunerations according to their skills. All these old traditional folk arts have vanished for want of patronizing, especially after the independence of India. In addition, we see that the custom of discouragement to learn folk songs in the so called 'cultured society' has contributed to their disappearance.

Those days there were many social occasions when *Bhajan* and *Kirtan* would be performed in the village temple. Some guests used to be permanently residing with us for attending these functions, such as Sujir Subba Rao (a doctor) from Poonjalkatta and Sheena Achari (a gold smith) from Kalladka.

The introduction of flute into my life is very interesting. During the *Dassera* festival, crop was being harvested in the fields just in front of our house. I could hear some musical notes coming from the fields. Out of curiosity I tried to find from where the sound was emanating. It turned out that one of the boys of the labourers was blowing a dried paddy stem, producing a very sweet note. Something inside me got ignited and I walked to him in a mesmerized state. I asked him how he managed to produce the note. He demonstrated it in a minute by cutting a stem from the paddy plant, about half an inch thick, slit it near the knot, inserted that part in the mouth and blew. Immediately I tried the same and was able to produce a note. I was inspired to make a flute from a paddy stem by producing more notes. I tried piercing it with a sharp piece of wood to make two or three holes, and managed to produce 2-3 different notes. But to my surprise the piece of the stem shrank within 10-15 minutes. I tried again at least 3-4 times and was quite happy with the results. This was how I learnt the basics of flute making. Then I was enthused to go in search of a suitable piece of bamboo reed in our 28 acres of land full of trees and bamboo bushes. I found a satisfactory piece only after a week's effort.

It had to be a secret mission because my father would have blasted me for indulging in banned activities. Hence I selected the bath-hut as my 'laboratory', which was about 15-20 metres away from our main house, and also because it was used by people only to take bath. This gave me the freedom to carry out my 'research'. Quite a few pieces of bamboo reed were brought and the holes were made from burning twigs, as the fire was available in the bath hut throughout the day. After it was made, I had to try producing a sound from it by blowing it softly. Sometimes it would accidentally get loud enough to be heard in the main house, and I could hear my name being called out. I would quickly hide the 'experimental materials' in the heap of ash and pretend innocence. Some crude flutes emerged out of these trials.

My practice sessions used to be during the holidays. I used to accompany our cowherd boy, Babu, to the hillside with our cattle. I could manipulate my fingers on these primitive flutes and managed to play several *Bhajan*. I was mighty pleased with the successful attempts at preparing flutes by myself. Babu would also carry his flute, but he played it by blowing from nose. He used to produce 4 notes with the help of 3 fingers of his right-hand while holding it with his left hand. He would close his left nostril and blow air into the flute through his right nostril. These long walks in the woods gave me a chance to practice peacefully.

As I grew up, I used my homemade flute to play various compositions in both Carnatik and Hindustani style. During festivals like *Janmashtami*, *Ramnavami* and in cultural programmes in school I played flute to accompany *Bhajan*s. Gradually I started gaining experience by taking every opportunity to play either solo or by accompanying any type of music that I liked. I was slowly getting recognized as a flute player and was invited on any occasion where music session in any form was organised. Whenever our Swamiji visited our town, there used to be Pooja performed at night in a temple. The last part of it was called '*Ashtavadhana*' which used to be very interesting for me since music was offered to God. *Ashtavadhana* comprised of eight parts. The first part had assortment of hymns from four *Veda*s, followed by *Gaddya-Paddya*, some *Ashtakas*, then *Sangeet Seva*, *Shankhvadya*, *Venuvadya*, *Maurivadan* and lastly '*Sarva Vadya*', including all of the above instruments, was offered with '*Maha-Aarati*'. These opportunities were quite educative for me and helped me a lot in improving my skills. Those days we did not have teachers in our village for imparting formal training in singing or other musical instruments. Nevertheless, even with the few opportunities I had, I could make remarkable progress in my flute playing and I continued to strive for improvement.

My first proper flute was gifted to me by my friend Mr. Kodikal Ramesh Rao in Puttur. That flute not only had a beautiful tonal quality but was made to the scale usually played for Carnatik style of music. It became my companion for more than a decade. I used this flute to participate in many small programmes. In 1943, I got my first formal invitation to accompany singers as well as to perform in the orchestra during the *Ramnavani* festival at Gulvady Ratnakar Bhat's residence at Mangalore. I could play

to any tonic pitch (*Shadja*) with one flute and it was easy for me to play flat notes (*Komal Swaras*) as well as sharp notes (*Teevra Swaras*).

I got my first proper flute for playing Hindusthani classical music after I started going to Pannababuji in March 1949, which was made by the renowned flute maker Mr. Limaye. The next flute was prepared for me by my *Gurubandhu*, Mr. Devendra Murdeshwar. Finally in 1952, I got a flute made by Mr. Mohan Nadkarni (of State Bank of India) as per instructions from Pannababuji. I have this flute even today, which I have been playing for about 58 years. And I played it just a few days back on 24th July 2011 at Pune in a program to celebrate Pannababuji's 100th birthday.

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4.

The calling wind

The kites are tossing
in the sky.
The wind is calling
"Come fly up high"-?

Initial jobs

In February 1943, I got my first job in a Town Co-operative bank at Mulki as a clerk. I worked under Mutthayya, Vaikunt Shenoy and U. Krishna Rao. I had a really good grooming under these three people. All of them liked my handwriting and sincere work. I used to give my entire salary of Rs. 15 to my father. Due to my interest in fine arts, I used to paint the sign boards and cinema slides and earn an additional 4-5 rupees per month over my salary. I used to keep this additional income for my petty expenses which included having coffee and snacks and still managed to save a few rupees at the end of the month!

In 1944, I got an offer to work in a private firm 'M/s. U.K. Bhujanga Nayak and Narsimha Dangia', yarn merchants at Salem in Tamil Nadu. Here my salary was Rs. 30 per month with board & lodging free in their mess for the staff of about 6-7 persons. In Salem those days I could listen to a lot of good music (Carnatic)

in marriage processions, especially the *Nadaswaram*. My interest in music got a boost here. I worked there for just a year and returned to Mulki, where my father was the agent for the Rice Reception Depot of South Kanara Central Co-op. Wholesale Stores. After Dassera the season for the levy rice started, which continued till February. My father needed a temporary clerk in that busy season and I was employed at a salary of Rs. 25 per month.

In December 1945, Food Inspectors of S.K.C.C.W. Stores Ltd., Mangalore, requested their President that they should be given some assistance in carrying out their duties, and were told to suggest some names. Mr. Krishna Rao, a Food Inspector, immediately suggested my name since he had observed my book keeping work in Mulki Depot and was quite pleased with it. In the month of January 1946, the food inspector of S.K.C.C.W. Stores came for usual inspection of the depot. He showed me a letter from their President Mr. Molahalli Shiva Rao appointing me as the Assistant Food Inspector, to work under the Food Inspector. This came as a bombshell because it was already planned that, I would leave for Bombay to join Dayanand, in search of a job. But my father was happy to see my appointment letter, since it meant that at least one of his four sons would stay with him in his old days. Three of his sons were already away from him; Dayanand and Vasant were in Bombay and Ramanand was at Calcutta. When I saw the happiness on his face I did not have the heart to disappoint him, so I surrendered to my fate and accepted the job of Assistant Food Inspector.

This post involved touring for 25 days in a month assisting inspection work by the food inspector. The salary of Rs 35 plus Rs. 16 as DA and Rs. 25 as other allowance was attractive. Initially I worked as an assistant; later the post was made independent and was designated as 'Stock Verification Officer'. In January 1948 Mahatma Gandhi declared that rationing should be discontinued, so the rice procurement had to be stopped. As a result we got notices of retrenchment and that was the end of my job. On 30th January we got the sad news of Mahatma Gandhi's assassination. Next day I had to go to Mangalore and hand over the charge of 'Stock Verification Officer'. After this short span of 2 years and 1 month service I became jobless with effect from February 1, 1948.

Arrival in Bombay and joining ITC

Dayanand was well settled in Bombay, so I confided in him about the retrenchment in early January 1948. He suggested that I should proceed to Bombay in search of a job as there were no prospects in Mulki. Those days it was very difficult to get employment in government, and the only options for clerical jobs were in banks. Therefore it was decided that I should try my luck in Bombay. I boarded a steamer in Mangalore, M.S. Sabarmati Service, on 19th February 1948 along with three friends. On the way, our Steamer touched the Marmagoa port (then under Portugal government) on 20th morning. During a break for unloading and loading of the cargo, we got about 4-6 hours to go to Vasco for a little shopping. All of us purchased Gold Flake cigarettes. Each tin of 50 cost 1 Rupee and 4 *Annas*. The steamer departed at 2 pm and since then we started playing cards and smoking continuously with breaks only for tea and dinner. The boat reached Bombay docks at 4am, so they announced that only after sunrise the ship would be taken to the docks. At that moment suddenly I realized that I had been foolish in smoking away the entire tin full of cigarettes. I felt extremely guilty and resolved to myself that I would never smoke again. I hurled the empty tin into the sea and have kept my resolve till today.

When the ship was brought to the docks Dayanand was already there to receive me with a taxi. I still remember I was quite impressed by its size; the make was either Chevrolet, Dodge, or Studbaker. He took me from *Bhaucha Dhakka* (the port) to Shivaji Park. On the way Dayanand was asking so many questions about the family members back in Mulki and about our house, my work etc. I kept looking out of the taxi pretending to be busy, just to avoid looking at Dayanand and was also scared that he might smell the cigarette if I spoke too much. When we came to Dayanand's residence (48, Zam Zam Darvesh Chambers, Opp. Kohinoor Mills on Lady Jamshedji Road, Shivaji Park), we found that his only daughter Durga had gone to Balmohan Vidya Mandir School, which was then housed in a flat just opposite Shivaji Park. We both went and brought her home. After wash and breakfast Dayanand left for work. His office, M/s. Getz Bros. & Co. (an American Import & Export firm), was located on Sir Phirozshah Mehta Road. Next day I accompanied him to his office. Though his office was on the first floor, he took me there by the

lift to give me an experience of using the lift. The jerk at the start was quite thrilling. He introduced me to many of his friends and acquaintances and told me to come to his office everyday during lunch hour. From next day I had an early lunch at about 11.00 a.m., went to Dadar railway station, boarded a train to Churchgate and reached his office before 1.00 p.m. and discussed the prospects of finding a job with them. Then I used to visit the offices suggested by them.

ITC, (the Imperial Tobacco Co. of India Ltd. which later became India Tobacco Company) had opened some new branches in India after the partition. Almost all the Hindu employees working in Karachi and Lahore branches had migrated to India to evade the onslaught after partition. In Western region two branches were opened, one in Ahmedabad and the other in Jabalpur. Dayanand's colleague, Mr. Ramachandrarao Kelkar (who earlier worked with ITC), brought the news of a few vacancies in these branches and suggested that I should put in an application for a job. On 3rd March 1948 I went to their office. The watchman asked me to wait in the lounge and carried a slip for Mr. Kowshik, requesting him for an interview. When called, I went inside and wished him. He offered me a seat and enquired about the purpose of the visit. He also asked me for my antecedents. I told him that I was informed about the vacancies in the Company by Mr. Kelkar. He immediately asked me which Mr. Kelkar I was referring to; was he the same person working in the Imperial Tobacco Co as a stenographer? I did not know the answer to his question since I hardly knew him.

Mr. Kowshik told me that he did not have an authority to take a decision in the matter and introduced me to Mr. V. M. Nawathe, the Depot Accountant. Mr. Nawathe enquired about my name and straightaway asked "Why and how many times did you change your job?" I told him that because of the retrenchment of our services from the erstwhile employer at Mangalore, I had to migrate to Bombay and was seeking my elder brother's help to get a job. He mentioned about one Mr. Karnad working as a stenographer in their office who worked only for a couple of years and left it for better prospects. He, nevertheless, asked me for the application letter, which I handed over to him. He just looked at my face and said 'You are a lucky boy'. I replied in a low tone "Thank you Sir, but in what way?" He said that my

handwriting was beautiful and in those days it was a great asset. I was then told to appear for a written test the next morning at 9.30 am. Mr. Nawathe explained that after passing this test I would also have to pass the medical test.

I appeared for the test next morning (4th March 1948). The question paper had arithmetic problems of preparing an invoice, a few questions on general knowledge and an essay to be written in 1½ hours. With my previous experience I could quickly tackle the calculations and invoice preparation. Even after answering the general knowledge questions and essay writing, I had half an hour to spare for checking and rechecking all my answers. Upon handing over the answer sheet to Mr. Nawathe, he took a red pencil and crossed all my answers to convey that all answers were wrong. I politely told him that there could not be a single error in my calculations in invoicing because I had checked and rechecked. Then he gave me a broad smile saying that he just wanted to check my confidence. I was then sent to Dr. Barucha whose clinic was in the Ballard Estate area for the medical test. It turned out to be a minor formality as only my height, weight etc. were checked to declare me fit and finally I received the appointment letter from ITC.

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5.
My days with ITC

Your work is to discover your work and then with all your heart to give yourself to it.

- Buddha

The early phase

I joined ITC as a junior clerk with a salary of Rs. 104. My first posting was in the godown at Parel where Mr. C.A. Gupte was the Godown Keeper. When I reported on duty he sat me down near his table, and continued to attend to the incoming telephone calls. He got busy with loading/unloading (supervision) of the stocks of cigarettes in the godown and asked me to attend the calls. The experience of speaking over the telephone was totally new to me. To top it all, I heard a foreigner's voice on the line which I could barely understand. I had to say "Beg your Pardon" at least twice or thrice. Then the person loudly said "You damn fool". Immediately I rushed to Mr. Gupte to tell him that there is a foreigner on the telephone. He rushed and talked to him for 2-3 minutes. When I apologised to Mr. Gupte and confided that I could not understand what he was saying on the telephone, he told me that he also found it difficult to understand every word when the Branch Manager, Mr. Powell spoke, but after a couple

of minutes he could guess the subject. It took me a few days before I could attend to the telephone confidently and learn to carry out the godown work. Mr. Gupte was pleased with my work and soon started entrusting the charge to me whenever somebody proceeded on leave. This gave me a thorough experience of all the aspects of Godown Keeping.

I joined ITC immediately after the independence, when the Government of Maharashtra introduced a 'Works Committee' in each and every organization. This system was meant to help the working class. Accordingly, a Works Committee was formed in ITC which consisted of five members each from Management and workers, as there was no union at that time. Since the chairman of this committee was a rather uncooperative British expatriate, the committee got dissolved after just six months. Thereafter the workers formed a union for their welfare. I was working in the godown where there were about 25-30 general workers and about 8-10 clerical staff, I being the junior most. The leader from the branch office selected me to work for the formation of the workers' union. After the general body meeting of all the workers, I was elected as a representative of staff from godown to the managing committee. Later I became Treasurer and played a very active role in the union.

My first lesson in this job was about the work efficiency. Once I was working after office hours. My British boss suddenly entered the room and questioned why I was working late. After hearing that I was trying to finish a pending job, he reprimanded that this implied inefficiency and I should finish the pending job first thing next morning. I took this warning with a positive spirit that transformed my attitude towards official work as well as in personal life.

After securing the job I wanted to pursue my passions seriously. First, I thought of learning to draw and paint and the second was to learn music. First I made enquiries in the 'Model School of Art' at Dadar. After knowing that I would incur an additional expenditure of Rs. 80, including a monthly fee of Rs. 30 and materials costing Rs. 50, I gave up the idea of taking the drawing and painting lessons. My salary was just sufficient to send Rs. 30 to parents at Mulki, give Rs. 30 to *Dayanand* for my stay with them and for my daily expenses of 2 annas for bus fare (to and fro Shivaji Park to Poibawdi); 2 annas for tea at 11 a.m.

and at 3.30 pm; and 5 annas for the mid day meal.

My meal used to be a vegetarian *thaali* (plate) at a *Khanaval* (canteen) near K.E.M. Hospital, which was near the godown. The vegetarian *thaali* consisted of 2 *phulka (*Indian bread*)*, 2 *mood* (bowls) of rice, *Amti, Bhaji* (cooked vegetable), small bowl of *dahi* (curd) and a small bowl of butter milk. At the age of 22, I could have easily eaten three such meals, but I could afford only one. After our godown work from 9.30 am to 5.00 p.m. with one hour lunch break I used to reach home before 5.30 p.m. I had plenty of time to spare in the evenings. I played the flute for a while and still had time on my hands. I had an interest in accounting/book keeping, but I could not afford to take any courses. Dayanand gave me his books on Accounting which he had purchased while studying for London Chamber of Commerce Exam. I studied invoicing, journalizing, cashbook writing, ledger postings and preparation of statements of receipts, payments, income and expenditure, trial balance sheets, profit and loss accounts, final balance sheet etc. It took me an effort of a year to master all of these.

I worked in the ITC for 36 years in various departments, first 17 years in the clerical grade and the rest in the management cadre. After I became the part of Works Committee in 1948, my job involved taking care of the labour problems. The Works Committee was required to meet with the President from management every month at least once.

In 1954, the company thought of opening the Western District Office with Mr. John Keneth Hill as the District Manager and I was selected as the District Statistics Clerk. We started this office from the Grand Hotel. One room on the ground floor was rented from 1st October 1954 with the staff of a Secretary; I was the statistics clerk and a peon. Mr. Hill was satisfied with my work of maintaining the Binder of the District Statistics, which he presented in the 'All District Managers' conference' at head office, Calcutta. All other district managers were impressed with the format I had developed and wished to have the same. I had to get it specially ordered for them from M/s. Gillenders & Arbathknot.

After 6 months, Mr. Hill was promoted as Director, Marketing and went to the Head Office and Mr. N. P. Sen (known as Potla

Sen) took over. After working for 6 months as District Manager, he too was promoted as Marketing Director at Head Office. During his tenure, Imperial Tobacco Co. of India Ltd. changed to India Tobacco Co. Ltd. and shifted the Bombay branch office from Henley House, Ballard Estate and District Manager's office from Grand Hotel to the Royal Insurance Building at Churchgate. Mr. Lawrie Tipton took over from Mr. N.P. Sen, Miss. Jenkins continued to be the Secretary and Mr. Narayana Suvarna was our peon right from 1st October 1954. Mr. Lawrie Tipton was a fine person and totally depended on Miss. Jenkins and me. I never saw him lose his temper except once when I reached office very late. That day Mr. Mishal, the painter contractor of Bombay branch had taken me to Mount Mary Hill at Bandra for taking photographs of a stall depicting 'Simla' Cigarettes. Our schedule got postponed because he arrived late by one hour. Unfortunately even Miss. Jenkins was absent that day because of illness. The Head Office at Calcutta wanted some information very urgently from our office, which Mr. Tipton could not provide since both the Secretary & me were yet to arrive. I got a good firing on reaching late, but after knowing the reason he immediately calmed down. This incidence reaffirmed my sincerity towards work and he was kind enough to express his appreciation.

I had high regards for Mr. Tipton also because he recognised my talent in music and respected it. Whenever I had to attend to music related work, he allowed me to leave office early. I used to compensate by working half an hour early and 1 hour during lunch recess. For instance, when Pannababuji needed me to accompany him from 3 to 10 p.m for cutting the L.P. and E.L.P. discs at H.M.V. studios or when I had to attend the rehearsals of the dance ballet arranged by Father George Proksh. This ballet went to Munich to participate in the world Eucharistic Congress in July/August 1960. Mr. Tipton strongly recommended special leave for my absence of one and half month for this Europe trip. Despite this, Mr. S.K. Daru (the head of our personnel department), went ahead and treated my absence as leave without pay, since he did not wish to create a precedence for unionized staff. This had upset Mr. Tipton.

Promotion to the officer's cadre and separation from Bombay

After the retirement of Mr. Tipton, Mr. S. Ray (*Montu Ray*), grandson of Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das (the well known freedom fighter from Bengal) took over his charge. Mr. Ray was a kind hearted and affectionate person, but was short tempered. We became quite close and he used to invite me along with my daughters to attend birthday of his adopted daughter. At work, whenever he asked for the statistics I used to quickly give it to him. One day, he asked me how I managed to do it so quickly and without any errors, since (there were no calculators or computers) all calculations had to be done manually. I told him that I maintained the statistical data as per the specific requirement of every district manager which was helpful. When he went through these files, he was surprised at the speed at which I was writing all those statistics. After a few days when we were discussing some points regarding the performance of the Sales for the district comprising of Bombay, Ahmedabad and Jabalpur branches, he liked the points I put forward. He mentioned to me that he wanted to recommend my name for promotion to management. I humbly mentioned that I was not a graduate. He replied that nobody would ask my educational qualification since I was intelligent, alert, sincere, hardworking, honest and good in English.

In May 1964, I was sent to our Head Office in Calcutta for a written test. The first day, I gave the test and the next day my elder brother Ramanand accompanied me. We started from his house at 8.30 am. To our ill luck, there was a strike that day and we had no other option but to walk. We were under great stress worrying whether we will reach in time. To our surprise, a speeding car came and stopped near us. The driver asked us to get in quickly to avoid any untoward incident created by striking workers. As it turned out, the car was driven by Mr. Shivan, who was the son of Yerdoor Sarvottam Rao, our relative from Guruvayanakere. He was on the way to his office and saw us walking very fast. I told him that I had come to Calcutta to appear for a promotion test. We felt that our family Goddess Sri. Shantha Durga took mercy and saw to it that I could take the test. I reached office with a couple of minutes to spare and the receptionist conveyed a message to Mr. Longland, Assistant Finance Director that I had arrived. I was immediately called to his cabin.

Mr. Longland received me with a smile and enquired as to how I managed to reach office in time from a distance of about 7-8 km especially when no public transport was available because of the great 'Calcutta labour strike'. I explained that a miracle helped me reach in time. None of the staff had yet reached the office. Then he asked me a very tricky and difficult question as to how the absence of all those who did not attend their duties that day would be treated; whether as casual leave or leave without pay. I took half a minute and replied "Since our company is a member of local chamber of Commerce we should wait for the decision to be taken as per their directive. This is an important point in the administration of the whole office system vis-à-vis the personnel problems". Mr. Longland was very pleased with my answer and we had a good chat. He asked me about my family background and other hobbies, activities etc. I had a cup of coffee with him and then I was sent to meet Dr. Sharma, who was a doctorate in personnel administration. He interviewed me on handling the union problems which I could answer, since I was a founder member of the Union at the Bombay Branch and had enough experience. Thereafter I had to meet Mr. Raj Chatterjee, who was the Personnel Director who had seen me in the Western District Office. The 'interview' turned out to be just a nice chat, nothing much on office matters since he already knew about my experience as an active member of the Bombay branch union. After the test and interview I returned by train and reached Bombay on 27th May 1964, the day Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru expired.

After a couple of months I was asked to accompany an internal audit team for auditing the Jullundur Branch. Mr. Balaji was the head of the team there and he knew me very well because he had been posted to Bombay Branch a few years ago. I assisted them for about a fortnight and returned to Bombay. I was told that I had passed the test and interview, but since there was no vacancy at that time, the letter of promotion with a place of posting, was not issued to me. On 1st January 1965, when I was on leave, I received a message from Bombay branch that I should report to the Branch Manager Mr. Osborne Carry. Upon reporting, he gave me the news that I was promoted to the officer's cadre and was required to go to Vishakhapatnam for one year training. I considered this as a wonderful gift for the new year. I was required to consume all my balance of privilege leave before proceeding on the new assignment.

While looking behind towards my ITC career in the clerical cadre, I recollected all those wonderful memories of the most affectionate relations with Miss. Megan Jenkins, Miss. Marie Booth and Mr. Narayan Suvarna of the district office.

I proceeded on privilege leave of two months and on 1st March left for Vishakhapatnam via Calcutta as I was advised to see the Finance Director Mr. P.E. John before proceeding to Vishakhapatnam. At Calcutta, Mr. John was kind enough to see me and gave a few important tips on office maintenance especially about the finance and handling of stock.

I reported to the Branch Manager, Mr. A.N. Mishra, at Vishakhapatnam. I had to undergo the training in finance control, stock handling, attending to personnel problems etc. under the office superintendent Mr. A. Raghupathy. Mr. Raghupathy was a fine person and stayed about 2-3 miles away from office at Virginia House, Marina Beach, near the Light House. The whole Vishakhapatnam was then known as a fishermen's village. I had to stay in hotel for over two months as my family had to remain in Bombay till the final examination of Nagaratna, who at that time studied in the 3rd standard.

In the month of May 1965 my family came to Vishakhapatnam. Mr. Raghupathy helped in finding a small house in Dwarakanagar. After the arrival of my family, I came to know that there was a good school near our residence on the way to Waltair Hills, Timpany High School run by some Canadian Mission. Nagaratna was admitted to the 4th standard but we were told that the School Semester had started from January and she was required to catch up with studies of four months. Luckily, we found a family called Pollocks, and Mrs. Pollock gave tuitions to Nagaratna to complete the portion she had missed and as a result Nagaratna fared very well. Meera, Nagaratna, baby Ameeta of seven months (born on 10th October 1964) and myself had a comfortable life with a car facility to commute to office and back even for lunch. There was a small market nearby, Dondaparti, from where we used to buy vegetables, groceries and other items of daily requirement.

Mr. Mishra was very fond of Hindustani Classical music. His residence was only one and a half kilometres from our house and hence he used to come to fetch us in his car at least two or

three times a week along with our instruments. He would then request us to play flute or sing various ragas and explain to him about *thaat, aroha, avaroha, taal* etc. The session used to go on for at least two hours and then he would drop us back home.

I had a month's training in our Kidderpore factory, Calcutta, in July 1965 and therefore I had to request my father to stay with Meera and children in Vishakhapatnam. We had no problem in Vishakhapatnam since Mr. Raghupathys' family was very helpful and our maid servant Narsamma was also very cooperative. After my training there, I was posted at Calcutta Branch at Strand Road. Before reporting at Calcutta Branch I took leave for fifteen days to go to Bombay with family.

After enjoying 15 days' leave in Bombay we proceeded to Calcutta, where I had to report to Mr. Osborne Carry, the same gentlemen who had given me the good news of my promotion on 1st Jan 1965. He was very glad to see me and extended all the help that I needed. When we first arrived in Calcutta we stayed at my elder brother Ramanand's house at Raja Basant Roy Road, where he lived with his wife Shalini, daughter Bharati and son Girish. I had requested him to find a flat for us near his residence, so that, in case of any emergency it would be convenient for either of us to reach each other. Somehow he could not get a flat in that area but found one in Gariahat area at a monthly rent of three hundred rupee and he had paid rent for two months in advance.

Next day, we went to see the flat, so that we could clean it before we shifted. We were quite taken aback at the site of it because the bath room, toilet and kitchen were not properly planned and the kitchen was dark and poorly ventilated. It was not at all suitable for a family like ours. We just cleaned the flat and returned. When Meera saw the flat she too was stunned to say anything in the presence of Ramanand. I felt helpless but had to tell Ramanand that we would find a better accommodation nearby and then shift our belongings there. Next day I explained my predicament to our District Manager, Mr. J.B. Singh and he assured me that I would be able to get a reasonably good accommodation. Luckily within a couple of days we found a two bedroom spacious flat on Shankar Road, through a broker at a rent of rupees three hundred and twenty five per month.

This was in 1966 when Jyoti Basu started the movement of communism. All the trade unions got activated and started the culture of "strikes" in every field resulting in very poor functioning in the city. Schools did not function regularly. In offices the staff became highly uncooperative and rude. When I was sent there on promotion one officer, Mr. Mukherjee was already in charge of the office administration and I was supposed to assist him. I used to monitor the office attendance and observed that excepting a couple of sincere workers everyone came at least 45 min. late every day without any justifiable reason. I started marking the late comers after giving them a grace of 15min. The union secretary Mr. Das was very annoyed with this discipline.

Once, when Mr. Mukherjee was on long leave, all the staff became highly uncooperative. During lunch time everyone would gather in the canteen where food would be available at the company's expense, they would start shouting "*Ami Karnadke marbo*! (meaning 'we will beat Karnad')." I kept quiet for a couple of days. When I got a call from Mr. Carry, the Branch Manager that he was going on tour for a week and I will be the sole in-charge of the branch for a week, I replied that he may not find me alive on his return. But before laying down my life I would take the lives of at least a couple of the staff! When he heard about the episode he was aghast and immediately called for Mr. Das and gave a strict warning that "if there is another complaint from Mr. Karnad about any rude behaviour from staff, I would not hesitate to close down the branch".

All this ended when luckily I got transferred to Ahmedabad because of an All India shuffling of officers. As I received the transfer orders, all of us were relieved of our tensions, as even Meera was being harassed by the land lady. Although we stayed only for four and half months, it was the most difficult period for all of us. Even Nagaratna had a very tough time. We left Calcutta in May 1966 and I joined the Ahmedabad Branch.

I took over from Mr. Batliwala as Depot Accountant at Ahmedabad branch. On my arrival at Ahmedabad, I stayed with my cousin. I could not take my family with me as I had to first find a suitable accommodation. After initial difficulties, I got a two bedroom flat about three kilometres away from my office, on the first floor in a house called 'Hansi' in Gulbai Tekdi area. The

Sachivalaya was housed in a building of Polytechnic School in the same area. My family could not join me immediately as our daughter Ameeta was down with severe Chickenpox and Measles, so all of them stayed with my in-laws at Bombay. Later, I brought them along with my parents and admitted my children to a nearby school.

One fine day, not even a month after we had shifted, I received a notice from the Accommodation Controller, Govt. of Gujarat, asking me to vacate the flat as it was near the Secretariat of Gujarat, making the area "requisitioned". A Muslim friend, who was a Manager of a bank, came to visit me and found me disturbed. When I narrated the reason, he came to my rescue. On advice of his friends in the government he suggested that my occupancy of the flat be considered under "Leave & License Agreement" and not on a tenancy basis. Accordingly, a back-dated agreement was prepared and presented to the Accommodation Controller. Having a look at the paper, he smiled and said that I could continue living in the apartment, but had a request. He was a Jew by religion and they were constructing a building for their community for which they would be happy to receive donations in the form of brick price. I happily contributed one hundred and one rupees and he promptly gave an official receipt for hundred and one bricks! I was relieved that my problem got sorted out with the help of a Muslim friend.

During this period, especially when Mr. Bhaskarla Sudhakar Rao was the Branch Manager, the long term agreement with the Employees' Union got signed. He suggested that I should take a break and take my family out for a week to Mt. Abu under official trip. I found it inappropriate since I was a strict follower of the rules and politely refused his offer, despite having a hectic schedule for nearly a month. However, I accepted his suggestion to go for godown inspection trip for seven days to Sumerpur and then spend a couple of days at Mt. Abu. We all, including my niece Geeta, went to Mt. Abu and then to Sumerpur. We thoroughly enjoyed this trip, thanks to the kind offer by Mr Sudhakar Rao.

Mr. Rao was a good administrator and also had high regard for me. He considered me a valuable asset for Ahmedabad Branch since I had good relations with persons who were highly placed

in government, semi-government and private institutions because of my activities in music. I had a great time in Ahmedabad for seven and half years with staff members and a number of branch managers who were very co-operative with me. I cherish the time I had with Mr. B. Sudhakar Rao (or 'Bertie') in particular, who was helpful in many ways. Sometime in 1970, Mr. Rao broke the news of my transfer to Bombay. He gave me a lot of old furniture that was written off from the books, at a paltry sum of three hundred rupees, to enable me to start an establishment in Bombay without hassle.

He kindly sanctioned my leave to take my family to Dwarka for Sri Krishna darshan. After the Darshan of lord Krishna, I requested the priest to kindly allow us to offer our musical service to lord Krishna. He readily agreed to our request and told us to come soon after dinner between 9 - 9.30 p.m. I went with my family and while they sang classical music and a few devotional songs, I followed by playing flute. The priest and other staff of the temple were very glad to listen to all these items and requested me to continue for some more time. In the end, to my surprise, the elderly priest recalled an instance when a well built Bengali flutist also had performed earlier with as big a flute as mine at that same place. From his description, I could immediately make out that the flautist mentioned by him was none other than my Guru Pt. Pannalal Ghosh. I was extremely pleased to learn that I had played flute in the same place where my beloved Guru, Pannababuji had offered his musical service to lord Krishna.

But somehow, when we returned from Dwarka trip the news of cancellation of transfer was conveyed to me.

Mr. Jacobs, the Branch Manager of Ahmedabad Branch, conveyed to me that I was being transferred to Delhi Branch w.e.f. 1st Dec. 1973 to take over the charge from Mr. D. K. Roy the Senior Office Asstt. Although my transfer would be from 1st Jan 1974, the promotion to Senior Office Asstt. would be effective only from 1st April 1974. The take over process was very tedious as many things were not in order in that Branch. Just the standing orders/Accounting Procedure especially regarding Furniture and Fixtures took fifteen-twenty days to get regularized. Even after taking charge, the work did not take off smoothly, so I had a tough time sending the returns in time.

I managed to survive many difficult bosses till finally I was transferred to Bombay in May 1976, much to my relief.

If I had continued in Delhi Branch for a couple of years more, I would have been entitled to further promotions because of my sincere and honest work. But I was transferred to Bombay on my own request. The main reason behind the request was to find a suitable match for Nagaratna. Also we wanted to find an ownership accommodation for us to stay after my retirement. I sent Meera ahead to find a suitable house in Western suburbs. I was entitled to a housing loan of Rs. 40,000 from the company, but the flat Meera selected at Borivali costed Rs. 47,000. My employers were kind enough to sanction the whole amount as a special case and we could purchase it. After sending my aged parents to my elder brother Ramanand, who was a Regional Manager of Central Bank of India at Gwalior, we came to Bombay. This arrangement was temporary, because we had to settle down in the new environment at Bombay, with school/college admission for my two daughters, Nagaratna, Ameeta and a niece Geeta Amladi. Later, we were to bring my parents to stay with us.

Unfortunately my father expired at Gwalior after a short illness at the age of eighty-seven years and I had to rush to Gwalior to bring my mother to Bombay. She preferred to stay with my younger sister at Khar. My mother did not live long and she too breathed her last in early 1977.

I retired from ITC Ltd. on 22nd September, 1983.

I did some work to help my friend Jayantibhai Joshi in his shop dealing in electrical appliances for about 6 months during 1984. I also helped one of ITC distrubutors of Ahmedabad for his business in hand made match boxes from Tamil Nadu.

In view of my extensive experience of handling both, the 'worker union matters' as well as the 'managerial grade issues', ITC invited me once again during 1987-91, on a retainership to help in converting the Bombay branch administration to a full fledged computerized branch. In this process, I handled several complicated matters such as retiring all the unionized workers with a 'golden handshake' and teaching the new entrants, who were all girls, with computerized accounts. Mr. A. Mubai, the

District Manager (West), was responsible for this whole project and he knew about my sincerity and honesty when he was posted at Ahmedabad branch.

It was quite painful for me to witness the end of the union activity of which I was a founder member!

Thereafter, we continued to live a comfortable life in our two bedrooms flat in Borivali. The only shock we had during this post-retirement period was the burglary in my apartment on 2nd August, 1990, the day on which Iraq attacked Kuwait. Along with all the valuable belongings I lost in this burglary, were the entire silverware I had received on my wedding, a golden *Shree Chakra* inherited from my father, my coin collection and the mementos of my flute recitals. All these stolen belongings could never be recovered. After a brief while we migrated to Pune in August 1991.

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Myself at work at Vishakhapattanam Branch of ITC Ltd. (1965).



John Kenneth Hill, my first boss and first district manager (sitting middle), N.P. Sen, second district manager (sitting right), Sardar Mirza, then branch manager (sitting left) and marketing executives (standing) (March 1957).



Left - Mr. S. Ray (son of *Deshbandhu* Chittaranjan Das's daughter) who took over the charge of District Manager, ITC Ltd. Bombay, from my boss Mr. Lowrie Edward Tipton (right).



ITC Sangeet Sammelan - Ustad Dagar after his Dhrupad performance.



ITC Sangeet Sammelan - Ustad Faiyaz Ahmed and Niyaz Ahmed, in the green room after their concert.



ITC Sangeet Sammelan - Pt. Nikhil Bannerji with Pt. Kishan Maharaj.



Lowrie Tipton with his secretary Ms. Jenkins and other lady members of the staff at Bombay Branch.



ITC Sangeet Sammelan - Master Ustad Shujat Hussain Khan, son of Ustad Vilayat Khan after his sitar recital



6.

You make me happy

You are my partner
For all my life
You make me happy when things are filled with strife
You help me enjoy my years
You fill me with gladness
And end my tears

- Adam Smith

Meera – My life partner

I was a member of Dadar-Matunga Sabha of Chitrapur Saraswats. In 1952, we had to arrange for Swami Anandashram's Camp at Karnatak building complex for three weeks. Mr. Mudur Prabhakar and I were given the charge of organising the cultural programmes.

Mr. Mudur took care of dramas, *Kirtans* etc. and I had to plan the music programmes. We planned to invite Bhanap (Saraswat) artists for both dramas and music programmes and I had to approach all Bhanap musicians. During that period I visited the residence of Miss. Meera Manjeshwar, at Matunga. I had heard her *Bhajan* earlier. It was our first meeting and of course, neither of us had any inkling of her becoming Meera Karnad in near future. The artists selected for the program were

Pt. Chidanand Nagarkar, Pt. S.C.R. Bhat, Pt. K.G. Ginde, Smt. Kausalya Manjeshwar, Saguna Kalyanpur, Meenakshi Trasi, Meera Manjeshwar etc. All the young Bhanaps volunteered enthusiastically. Swamiji arrived with his retinue for a stay for three weeks.

I was also supposed to be acting for a role of '*Sant Appayya*' in a drama written by Mudur Prabhakar. After rehearsals, some of us would do the night watchman's duty at the Pendal where Swamiji was camping. This Pendal was quite big, built between the buildings of Karnatak C.H.S. Ltd. and Kanara House. A few of us including Mr. Padukone Venugopal, Nagarkatti Vishwanath, Nadkarni Vasant, Pombatmajal Ganesh and Hosangady Vasant were very regular in night duties. Mr. Padukone was the centre of attraction there, since he used to read horoscopes and many of us used to consult him and used to enjoy these sessions. On one such occasion, Nadkarni Vasant quietly slipped a copy of my horoscope to Miss. Meera Manjeshwar. After a few days while returning from a *Pooja* (a prayer) at Santacruz, Vasant told me that my horoscope matched well with that of one of the Bhanap girls. I was surprised at his statement and asked him how he got my horoscope and who was the girl. He would just not tell me the details. After a good period of suspense, he told me the girl was none other than Miss. Meera Manjeshwar. Although I found her simple looking, I liked her singing. I took some time to make up my mind, because my elder brother *Ramanand* who stayed at Calcutta was yet to be married. This development was in the beginning of Jan 1953. Within a week, the girl's family started sending signals for the alliance and I had to tell them that I would consider the proposal once my elder brother got married. Nearly 2-3 months passed in this uncertainty, while quite a few of our common friends and relatives kept pressing for the alliance. One day at 10.30 p.m., I heard a sweet voice singing *Raag Darbari Kanada* in the style of Ustaad Amir Khan on Bombay Radio 'B' station. I was quite impressed and was keen to know the name of the artist. They announced it to be Miss. Meera Manjeshwar who was singing in place of an artist who was absent. This was the turning point and I decided that if the proposal came again, I would say yes and it did.

I had just one condition that her latest photograph with horoscope should be sent to my parents. They would consult an astrologer at Mulki to match our horoscopes. My mother replied

approving our alliance since our horoscopes tallied with highest marks. I wrote to my elder brother Ramanand in Calcutta, who gave me the green signal. Dayanand returned from his vacation in Goa with family by April-May 1953 and I broke the news. His response was not exactly ecstatic, since my elder brother Ramanand was still not married, I had only 5 year's service experience and I did not have a place to stay after marriage. Dayanand's place was very small and my monthly salary was about two hundred fifty rupees out of which I used to send a sum of forty rupees to Mulki and a sum of thirty rupees was spent for my stay with him. Thus renting an apartment was out of question.

However, the providence was in my favour. I got sudden windfall with a long term agreement between the Employees Union and the ITC management for better wages and fringe benefits. With this, my monthly salary increased by about seventy five rupees plus arrears. I felt this was a good sign and realised that Meera would prove to be a '*Griha Laxmi*' in its true sense. Once the alliance was fixed, I started visiting Meera every evening and spent a couple of hours in a corner garden of Parsi Colony. During our courtship from June to December 1953 we had ample opportunities to exchange our views about the style of living, financial arrangements etc. Meera had confided in me about all the difficulties they had faced prior to her father's demise in March 1952. Before the wedding, as per my mother's advice, no demands of any kind were made from the boy's side. The girl's family also belonged to lower middle class; we were only to give her *Kashi Tali*, golden hair pin, sarees etc. Meera had politely enquired whether we were expecting diamond ear rings, ring or gold jewellery as per the custom. I expressed that we have no demands and they should make them only if she wished. In July 1953, on receiving the arrears, I sent seven hundred rupees to mother to make the planned gifts. I also purchased five sarees for daily use of the bride in addition to a Banarasi silk saree for the bride to wear in *Mantwi*. The arrangements from the groom's side were eventually completed.

The day of the wedding was fast approaching and I was keen that my parents should attend our wedding along with sisters Shashikala, Hemalatha and Suneethy, maternal uncle Karambar Shridhar, with his wife Sumana. The newly weds could then be

blessed by all the main elders of the family. To arrange for their travel expenses, upon my request, Ramanand readily advanced Rs. 1,000. All of them arrived by steamer via Mangalore, Goa and then reached Bombay in time. Sumana could not make it, but Shridharmam brought his youngest son Gurudutt along. The wedding ceremony concluded on 31st December 1953 and all my friends and relatives attended it. Most importantly for me, my dearest Gurudev Pt. Pannalal Ghosh attended the wedding and we were lucky to get his blessing.

We started staying in my in-laws' house at Matunga which continued for another three years. Meera's family consisted of mother, brothers and a sister. I must really appreciate all of them since they treated us in an accommodative manner, so we could spend these three years without any ill feeling. The only unpleasant moments were the two mis-carriages that Meera had there. Later when she conceived, she insisted that my family should come to Bombay. It could also help my sisters get married, because all four brothers were away, it was getting difficult for my aged parents to look for suitable alliances for them in Mulki. We planned to shift to a flat in Matunga and the negotiations were finalized verbally. Thus my parents along with two sisters wound up the set up at native place and shifted to Bombay. At the last minute the landlady backed out from her word to rent her flat and we were in a fix. Since Dayanand could accommodate only two members, my parents stayed with him while my sisters stayed with us. Meanwhile on 23rd December 1956 we were blessed with our first child, Nagaratna. She was delivered at Dr. K.V. Pai's nursing home at Hindu Colony, Dadar, where Amladi Chandrabai happened to be the head nurse. Those days after delivering a child mother stayed in the nursing home for 10 days which cost us only Rs.100. Both mother and child were brought home and we continued to stay with my in-laws at Matunga.

Once again we resumed the project of looking for a house nearby. Those days the municipal limits were up to Sion where the *Pagadi* (non-refundable deposit) for a one bed room flat cost Rs.1,000.00. Firstly we could not afford it and secondly I considered it unethical. We managed to get two rooms in a small house in Goregaon for Rs. 1,000 as deposit with a rent of Rs.30 out of which Rs.15 was adjusted towards the deposit. In the meantime, I requested Ramanand for a loan. He and Suneethi,

my youngest sister who worked in Calcutta and stayed with him, together advanced Rs. 1000. I was very grateful to them for a timely support. I repaid their loan after receiving a bonus in early 1958.

This was the beginning of our independent life. My financial status could barely take care of my family that consisted of parents, two sisters (Shashikala and Hemalatha), Meera and baby Nagaratna. Since Goregaon was outside the municipal limits at that time, we went through the hardships of having no drinking water and electricity. The drinking water was brought from a distance of half a kilometre from Siddharthnagar in two buckets. The washing and bathing was managed with the hard water drawn from a bore-well with a hand-pump. On 15th August 1957 we got municipal water supply on the road side just opposite our room and during *Diwali* the same year, we were lucky to get the electricity connection. Those were the days when I could not afford to buy even a ceiling fan and we had to manage with a table fan. This was kept in the kitchen where my parents used to rest. The front room was used by my sisters, wife, child and me. We had to face the mosquito menace as the marshy land was just next door. The doors used to be closed at 6.00 p.m. till next morning and the windows had some screens made from the mosquito net. Both the rooms were of the same size about 10' x 12' with a washing place in a corner in the kitchen. Only after a couple of years we could afford a 'Crompton' ceiling fan.

During those days, we never celebrated the birthdays of elderly people. But when we purchased a set of steel folding dining table and 4 chairs, I casually mentioned to my father (born on16th July 1890) that this first big purchase for our home was to celebrate his 75th birthday. He became quite sentimental and blessed me wholeheartedly. I believe their blessings have helped me in fulfilling my goals in life.

Although both Meera and I were artistes in AIR we did not have a Radio of our own. I heard Meera's programmes only in our office canteen or at AIR's guest room at their Marine Lines office. Meera used to listen to my performances at one of our neighbour's house. After about 3-4 years I purchased one second hand Radio (Philips) from our District Manager's Secretary Ms. Megan Jenkins for Rs. 300 which I paid in 3-4 monthly installments.

Despite all the financial constraints, I really had a very good time with my daily visits to Malad to have my lessons in music till September 1956, when Pannababuji with Mataji shifted to New Delhi. As Nagaratna was growing, Meera gave birth to our second daughter Kshama, on 6th November 1958. She grew to be a cute and an intelligent child.

I had the first shock of my life when Pannababuji passed away on 20th April 1960. The second jolt we experienced was the tragic death of Kshama on 9th May 1963. Even Dayanand died the following year.

Kshama was just 4 years old when we decided to go to Shirdi and Nasik for a change. We had a great time there swimming in the Godavari river. Kshama contracted gastroenteritis somewhere along the trip. Although we gave her some medicines, the doctors advised us to rush back to Bombay for proper treatment.

What followed was the saddest experience of my life. We left Nasik at 3 pm. Near Kalyan, the child suddenly fell unconscious. Immediately on reaching Dadar we rushed her to the maternity hospital in Hindu Colony where she was born. They gave her an injection and asked us to take her to Talwalkar hospital near Ruia College. Unfortunately no beds were available there, so we had to take her to Wadia Hospital for children at Parel. My child was unconscious for nearly 3 hours by then and still no real treatment had started.

At Wadia hospital we met with the most insensitive, ignorant and reluctant doctors undergoing internship. Instead of examining the child on an urgent basis, they kept following the protocols of taking our interview, taking her weight, filling up the forms, changing her clothes even before having a look at her. Precious time was lost in all this procedure. In desperation I telephoned Dr. Chandrakant Joshi, a friend at Malad, to ask whether he knew anyone in the hospital. He said he did not, but sensing the anxiety in my voice he immediately started from Malad along with Mr. Haripada Chaudhary. When my child was eventually taken for examination, the doctor was careless enough not to carry his stethoscope which a nurse brought to him later. The next thing we heard as soon as he came to the door was that she was dead!

We were shocked and exasperated at the whole scene and felt totally helpless. I called my brother, who rushed to the hospital. The doctors were insisting for a post mortem, but I had no heart to let the body be cut up when nothing could be done while she was still alive. With the help of Dr. Joshi we convinced the hospital staff to release the body without post mortem and they agreed after great difficulty. It was 11.30 in the night and we had no cloth to wrap her into, so my brother's dhoti was torn and a piece was used to cover her body. We buried the body at Shivaji Park Crematorium and all of us were dropped at Matunga to my in-law's place.

The trauma did not end there! Next day, the Chief reporter of Indian Express, Mr. C. Trikannad, a neighbour of my in-laws visited us to pay the condolences. When he enquired about the how and when, I narrated my whole experience to him. In the next days paper on the front page the story was printed in a conspicuous way, narrating my harrowing experience at the hands of incompetent doctors and the inhuman treatment we received from them. The story also made headlines in 'Blitz' along with my daughter's photograph which was covered by B.K. Karanjia. Just before this, another case of child death due to negligence had happened in St. George Hospital. These two cases created a big hue and cry in Bombay. The Dean of Wadia hospital conducted an enquiry in the matter, and arrived at a conclusion that the child was given oxygen etc. This was a totally fabricated story, and out of sheer frustration I approached Mr. Madhukar Chaudhary, the then Health Minister to tell the truth.

To top it all, some of my friends took this episode in a wrong spirit. They thought I had cashed in on my own daughter's death to get publicity. Although I was doing very well in the musical career and in the office, the deaths of these beloved ones, was too aggravating. We hence decided to leave Bombay at the first available opportunity and accordingly I accepted the promotional transfer to Vishakhapatnam.

Thereafter we were blessed with third daughter, Ameeta, on 10th October 1964. On March 1st, 1965, I left Bombay. Meera, along with Nagaratna and Ameeta, stayed back with her mother at Matunga. They joined me at Vishakhapatanam at a later date where I was posted for training.

Meera – The support in my life

It is said that behind every successful man there is a woman. And I feel that this was absolutely true in my case. Although we came from similar financial and cultural background, both of us were artists striving to establish on the music scene of Bombay. After marriage her life was full of compromises. Meera also accepted the responsibility of my parents and younger sisters' settlements. She had two miscarriages in the three years that we stayed with her parents. The third time when she delivered a baby girl she was already having the responsibility of my two sisters and parents in the small house that we rented far away in Goregaon. We had another daughter in 1958. We were eight people living in two rooms. On top of this my third sister from Calcutta got pleurisy and was sent to Bombay to recover. Since our daughters were quite young my wife had to shift to her parents for three months as a precaution. After Kshama's demise in 1963 she stopped singing altogether. She resumed nearly one year later after being coaxed by our childhood friend Shamala Haladi.

She was burdened with increasing responsibilities whereas I was very busy with my work and pursuit of music. So she had to bear it all on her own. Tackling all the domestic problems and relationships in the small house that we lived in must have been quite stressful for her. Thus she has taken the major share in the responsibilities and hurdles we have faced. Her support in my life has been my major strength. I consider myself lucky that she became my *Ardhangini* in the true sense of the word.

Meera completely sacrificed her musical career while shouldering the domestic responsibilities. I cannot find appropriate words to thank her.

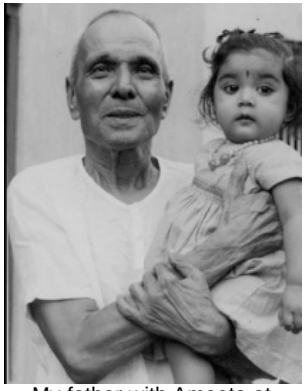
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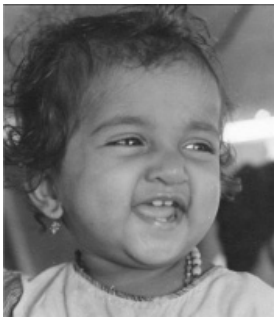
Myself and Meera (1954)



With Nagaratna and Ameeta in February 1965 just before leaving for Calcutta



My father with Ameeta at Vishakhapatnam in 1965



Kshama



Meera with Ameeta at ishakhapattanam, 1965



When on a holiday with family –
Jog falls are seen in the background



A bath in Godavari at Nasik with both the daughters in May 1963



7.
Social activities

"Engage yourselves in service activity. Consider social service as service to God. This is the best way to earn God's Love."

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

With the job secured, my life started to get stable. In the building where I stayed on the 3rd floor in Shivaji Park, Mr. Mohan Nadkarni, used to live on the 2nd floor. He was in the service of the then State Government of Bombay and later rose to be a stalwart music critic with the Times of India Group. He lived with his cousin whose husband introduced him to me sometime in October 1948. He asked me whether I was the one who played flute which he had heard a few times. I said yes. He then wanted to know with whom I was learning. I mentioned that I listened to some discs and programs on AIR. Those days AIR would broadcast very good programmes of instrumental music between 7.45-8.15 am, which I used to listen religiously and try to reproduce.

While we lived in Goregaon from 1957-1964, I had a good number of friends with whom I could converse in Marathi and all of them were music lovers. Whenever I practised flute, they would come along to listen. On a *Dasara* day as per the custom of Maharashtra we visited friends and exchanged *Aapta* leaves after which I was requested to play flute on the terrace of P.K.

Desai's house. After enjoying my recital, a suggestion came forth that a Cultural Institute be formed in Goregaon. The question of raising funds came up and ten members readily agreed to contribute 10 rupees each on the spot. For our first programme, we had to find an artist who would perform for Rs. 100. Mr. Baindurkar, my colleague in ITC Ltd. suggested the name of *Mr. Gajanan Watve*, the famous Marathi singer of those days. To our surprise and pleasure, he readily agreed and gave a very successful performance. I put up a tea stall, which surprisingly fetched me a profit of Rs. 18 which was given to our institute, 'Maharashtra Kala Mandir'. This is still remembered by my contemporaries. The success of this program encouraged us to hold many such concerts under the banner of Maharashtra Kala Mandir. Great artists like Sambaprasad Sawkar, Vinodini Dikshit, Malati Pandey, Bhimsen Joshi, Pannalal Ghosh and many more such artistes gave their performances. Later, in addition to musical programmes, dramas like *Vahato Hee Durvanchi Judi*, *Oon-Paus* etc. were also included.

In the early days at Goregaon, the law and order situation was bad with many burglaries taking place, especially in the People's Colony where we stayed. Some of us offered to do night-watchmanship in shifts. We also started giving first-aid to the residents during the epidemic of influenza.

When in Ahmedabad, a body was formed as 'Ahmedabad Konkani Association' for the benefit of Konkani speaking people, in which I was a member of the managing committee. The association was very active in conducting periodical programs of entertainment.

Near our residence in Gulbai Tekdi at Ahmadabad, there was an empty plot of land. During the communal riots in 1969, we used to sit in this open space and spend time during curfew hours. After a few years, we came to know about a rumour that this plot was going to be sold to a mill owner who would build a palatial building there. We resented the idea since the nice open space would get blocked. We thought of a plan of converting it into a place of devotion for people to spend some moments in peace. A suggestion came forward that we bring a *Shiva Ling* and install it there. Another neighbour thought of even brighter idea of converting it into a *Swayambhu Ling*. Without losing time, some of us went to a sculptor and purchased a *Shiva Ling* in

white marble. At midnight, four of us including Nagaratna went to the centre of the plot and with the help of pick axe and spade, dug a pit and placed the *Shiva Ling* there and covered it with the sand leaving only the tip of the *Shiva Ling*. From next morning, all those involved in this project, kept a watch on the reaction of passers by, especially the ladies. Soon enough, it was discovered by a few ladies who cleared some more of the sand and could identify that it seemed like a *Swayambhu Shiva Ling*. Immediately the word spread like wild fire and more ladies came with milk, rice and flowers to offer to the god. In the evenings, people from the neighbouring area started meeting at the spot and discussing that this "*Swayambhu Shiva Ling*" should be properly placed on a stage like platform and should have a roof over it, along with a proper protective railing.

Quite a number of volunteers came forward with donations in cash and kind, for making it a place of worship for the devotees. Even a name was chosen for the temple as Somnath Mahadev because it was made public only on a Monday (*Somvar*). I got a board painted with this name, from one of our ITC painter contractors and thus the temple got named. Then on, more people took interest in building a temple of a bigger size, Dr. Vaidya brothers, Nanabhai Thakore and many more, decided to hold an installation ceremony. This was conducted and a bigger sized temple was built around the *shivling*. We put an application for an electricity connection in the name of Somnath! That year after a proper building was constructed, during Navratri a big *garba* festival was held and a well-known singer Smt. Saroj Gundani took a leading role in it. Soon I got transferred to Delhi branch. But I did visit the place after a few years to find the temple having developed into a big and beautiful structure with more deities finding a place there.

When in Delhi, from December 1973 within a short period of 6 months, I was elected as a Treasurer in the Konkani Association. During the 'Emergency' days, the Konkani Association made a donation to the Prime Minister's Fund which otherwise would have been spent on crackers during Diwali. We handed over the cheque to Mrs. Indira Gandhi, the Prime Minister and a group photo too was snapped.

In addition to the above mentioned activities, I always took interest in the religious activities connected with our *Dharmaguru*,

wherever I was posted.

While we stayed in Borivali, in 1978 April-May, a group of 4-5 young men from the *Saraswat* community visited me with a request that I should become the Chairman of a cultural organisation called 'Chitrapur Saraswat Association'. Although my main interest was to practice and teach flute, I reluctantly agreed to their request. Their activities included arranging picnics, sports, annual gatherings, etc. In one such activity, our *Dharmaguru*, Swami Parijnanashram was invited. The residents of Borivli and nearby places like Dahisar, Kandiwali, Malad, Jogeshwari, Andheri, attended the gathering held at a hall on S.V. Road. The main item was the felicitation of three senior citizens, Smt. Girijabai Heble, Mr. Rama Rao and Mr. Hattangady Dattatreya Rao, who had actively participated in the independence struggle. The most active worker happened to be Mr. Gurunandan Panemangalore.

At this time Dr. Girijabai offered her bungalow '*Visawa*' for holding periodical meetings of the association. Gradually the activities of the association expanded to having a library, reading rooms, annual gathering, drawing competition for school children, etc. Dr. Girijabai used to give homoeopathic medicines free of cost to the patients. One day she expressed her wish to donate her bungalow including the plot to the association. Although it was a kind gesture on her part, we suggested that a trust be formed to fulfill the purpose of her sacrifice. Accordingly, the 'Visawa Trust' was formed. A building was constructed having an auditorium called 'Sri. Vamanashram Hall', with a capacity to accommodate about 300-400 people and a dozen 1 BHK flats. The flats were meant for the needy members of the community on 'no profit no loss' basis. I am very happy that today the 'Vamanashram Hall' has become a popular cultural centre in Borivali and Westren suburbs. The 'Drawing Competition' for school children is a very popular event being held there annually with great pomp and show. Unfortunately, the founder members Dr. Girijabai, Mr. Rama Rao, Mr. Hattangady Dattatreya Rao and Mr. Gurunandan Rao are not amongst us any more.

Sometime during 2001-2003 at Pune, I joined the Chitrapur Math (near Chandni Chowk) as their manager. I took keen interest in the duties especially whenever our Swamiji Sadyojat Shankarashram stayed in the Math for the benefit of the persons

belonging to the community. I offered my sincere services to the Math and Swamiji for 25 months.

After the sudden demise of Pannababuji, his senior students including Mr. Haripada Chaudhary, Rasbihari Desai and me, decided to meet frequently at his residence at Malad. We played flute and also trained fresh students. Devendra Murdeshwar, his senior student and son-in-law, was away at New Delhi those days. We decided to form a committee in the name of Pannalal Ghosh which would propagate his teachings to the future generations and also expose them to the music of great artists of those days. Pt. Nikhil Ghosh, his youngest brother, declined to take an active part in it since he was tied up with his own school called Arun Sangitalay. He agreed to be a General Secretary on paper, and I was made the Joint Secretary. So this committee was formed and formally registered in 1962. Later, a regular school for teaching flute was started. It was conducted in Chhabildas High School premises at Dadar. In keeping with Pannababuji's tradition no fees were charged. A good number of students attended this class and got benefited. We arranged many programmes through the committee and school which drew a reasonable publicity.

Around this time, Mr. Vijaypat Singhania of J. K. Industries enquired with Mr. Brij Narayan of 'Sur Singar Samsad' about a teacher who could teach him to play flute. He suggested my name, so Mr. Singhania contacted me. I started visiting his house for imparting flute lessons. He heard about our school at Dadar and how we gave free tuition to the students. He was amazed and suggested that we raise some funds for the school by organising a programme. We contacted Ustad Ali Akbar Khan for his Sarod recital and he readily agreed to play and also promised to bring his son Ashish Khan to accompany. For the Tabla accompaniment, he suggested that we contact Ustad Alla Rakha. It was decided to hold two concerts, one of which they promised to play for free. We published a souvenir for this event and could collect a number of advertisements, thanks to the efforts of Mr. Singhania along with his friend Mr. Murli Deora.

Gurujee was away in Delhi, so Mr. Sohrab Modi contacted me in the office requesting for a flute recital. The programme was to be presented before a well known American flautist Mr. John Smith. I performed in an evening recital at Kantibhai Morarji

Desai's house at Pedar road some time during 1957-58. The main raga I played was *Pooriya Kalyan* before a small audience. After the recital was over, an American gentleman (who was a top executive of the then Standard Vacuum Oil Company) came up to me to express his feelings on *Pooriya Kalyan*. He said that the feeling he got was, as if he was sitting on the sands of a sea shore witnessing the Sun slowly setting in the sea with crimson coloured sky. I explained to him that the melody was based on a combination of rag *Pooriya* and *Kalyan*, both being the evening *raga* and hence his feeling was appropriate. It was satisfying for me personally that my rendition of *raag Pooriya Kalyan* could convey the evening mood.

A short recital of Sarod by Ustaad Allauddin Khan was arranged by 'Suburban Music Circle' at Santacruz before he was to proceed on a Haj pilgrimage. Baba had brought his grandson, Ashish Khan to assist him in the concert. Once, while playing Ashish Khan played a note which was out of tune and Baba reacted angrily and said "*Besuraa*!" Later he felt bad about being harsh to his young grandson and just kept the Sarod down and tears started flowing from his eyes. Baba's reaction conveyed that he was as sensitive a human being, as he was as an artiste.

In the year 1960 a grand music festival was arranged by the Gandharva Mahavidyalaya at Kolhapur, in a huge pandal. I was booked for a flute recital in that festival. Unfortunately due to heavy rains the venue was changed and the programmes were held in the Ghatge-Patil transport company's garage shed. I played *Miyan Malhar* to use the base flute and the concert was duly applauded by many a stalwarts of Gandharv Mahavidyalaya in which Pt. Vinayakbua Patwardhan was conspicuous by his presence. After my recital, Ustaad Vilayat Khan gave a Sitar recital.

Mohan D. Nadkarni, a music critic, had learnt vocal music from Pt. Pakeerappa Kundgolkar of Kirana Gharana. He wished that I became a devotee of Swami Muktanand Baba (the close student of Swami Nityanand) of Ganesh Puri. He took me to Ganesh Puri Ashram with him for playing flute before Swamijee. After arrival, I played flute before him for a brief while. He then told me to stay back for the night and play it again the next day. Accordingly I played flute early morning the next day for about an hour. Then he again told me to play flute in the Turiya Mandir

before a big audience including Mr. Savant, the then revenue minister of Bombay. He seemed to like my flute playing, so I frequently visited the place and offered my music.

While in Ahmedabad in 1976, my wife Meera and I used to regularly broadcast on All India Radio. As a result I got recognition as a flautist in Ahmedabad. Those days classical music had not gained much popularity. The Gujarat University however decided to hold an annual competition for classical dance and music. Mrs. Mrunalini Sarabhai was the chief of the panel of judges. I had an opportunity to judge the event along with other well known artistes like Pandit Sukhrajsing Jhala (Sitar), Pandit Ravjibhai Patel and Pandit Atul Desai.

It was in 1993 that Pt. K.L. Ginde of Pune took me to Ahmednagar to play flute before H.H. Shankaracharya of Sringeri and both Pt. Ginde and myself performed before Swamiji. After the programme we went to take '*prasadam*' and blessings from him. He asked my name and then told me that I should visit Sringeri Math being a Saraswat. Therefore the next year, both Meera and myself, went to Sringeri and met Swamiji. I requested him for a chance to offer my flute *seva*. He asked me to play during '*Abhisheka*' at night. I was really very happy to play for nearly half an hour.

I used to teach flute music in a room at Kanara House, Matunga Road (West). Mr. Girish Karnad, a well known and versatile personality from the film industry, was also known to me as a famous member of the Karnad family. Later I found that despite being a famous figure, he was a very nice and easily approachable person. He used to stay in his flat at Karnatak Buildings in the neighborhood of Kanara House. Once he came to me and said that he would be directing a film named "Utsav" being produced by Mr. Shashi Kapoor. There was a scene in which Mr. Shekhar Suman, the hero of the film, was to play flute. Being a perfectionist, Mr. Girish wanted the scene to be natural and precise in all respects. He requested me to teach him techniques such as posture, grip on the flute, fingering and blowing etc. Mr. Shekhar Suman had 2-3 sittings in our class. He also visited us at my home to receive few more lessons.

Mr. Girish Karnad was satisfied with Mr. Shekhar Suman's improved act of playing the flute. I saw the film and was glad to see that he had not forgotten to acknowledge me in the list of artists.

Some amusing memories to share.

I was in Salem between October 1944 and September 1945 for my job. I was responsible for many activities there. I had to look after a small factory which was producing pile carpets from goat hair. The workers were mostly women except 3-4 male workers, all of whom came from a poor background. There were only 2-3 looms of good quality, while all others were pit looms. Only two of us were responsible for the management of the factory whereas all others were workers. My job was to provide raw material, keep record of salary and attendance of workers and dispatch finished products of two grades of pile carpet. My assistant was a young *Saurashtra Brahmin*. During my six month's work there, he got married. He arranged a lunch party at his residence to celebrate his marriage. It was a true South Indian style lunch with Rice, *Rassam, Sambaram, Porial*, pickles, etc. Because I happened to be the bridegroom's boss, I was given the first place in the line on the floor with plantain leaves, etc. As they started serving various dishes on the plantain leaves, after the rice, a gentleman brought a big *degchie* with some liquid that looked like *rasam*. As per the system, I made some space in the heap of rice meant for the *rasam*. The gentleman smiled and poured a tumblerfull of liquid to fill that crater I had made. To my shock, it turned out to be ghee! I noticed only after it started solidifying and looked white. As the gentleman went to the next person to serve, people next to me hurried to stop him from serving in the same way. Everybody started laughing and I had no alternative but to eat all that ghee with *rasam, sambar*, etc. After the lunch, it took me at least fifteen minutes to clean my right palm by rubbing it against a granite stone!

There was another incident, when my colleague, Mr. C.R. Vyas from ITC Ltd. invited me to his new house in Mulund which was a mile away from the railway station. The house was in a field and the occasion was a *Satyanarayan Pooja* on the first birthday of his son – Suhas Vyas. As I was staying with my eldest brother in Shivaji Park and his family was away in Madras on holiday, my brother was also invited for Prasad meals at Mr. Vyas's place in Mulund. We went promptly on that day and after the *Pooja*, *Teerth-Prasad*, we were made to sit in *Pangat* (line) for lunch. My brother was the eldest and hence was given the first place followed by myself and a *Gurubhai* of Mr. Vyas. The lunch

progressed with *poli*, *bhaji*, rice, *waran* etc, and then the turn for sweet dish came. It was a very richly made *basundi* and *puri*. The *puris* were being served. My brother took 3-4 puris. I took 4-5 and the person next to me took the full serving of about 10-12 *puris*. Then *basundi* was served. It was served in tall tumblers. My brother and myself took only 1/3 rd of the tumbler, while the gentleman next to me took a tumblerful. During the second and third round of serving of *basundi* and *puri*, we took nothing while the *Gurubhai* took tumblerful of *basundi* every time. My brother and I could not finish the first serving while this gentleman who was hardly 80-90 pounds in weight finished everything! In all, he had taken at least 20-25 *puris* and at least 3 tumblers of the rich *basundi*. We had actually witnessed this unbelievable sight! When I met Mr. Vyas the next day in our godown, I casually enquired about the gentleman. I wanted to know whether he was all right. He didn't know the story and hence I described how that person with a frail figure enjoyed so much food.

I cannot resist the temptation of narrating a few funny anecdotes here where my imposing personality came to my rescue to deal with impudent behaviour I encountered.

Once I wanted to go to the Esso Gas Office in Richardson Cruddas building at Byculla. I came out of the railway station to take a taxi. When I asked the drivers to take me to Byculla, two taxi drivers refused to do so because of the short distance. Then I went to the third taxi, opened the door and occupied the rear seat. The taxi driver asked me where I wanted to go. I replied that I wanted to go to Byculla and he refused as expected. By then I had lost my patience and said in a firm voice, "I am a retired police officer. I can book you for 'refusing to take a passenger to a place he wants to go, without any valid reason. Your driving license and taxi permit will be cancelled". The reprimanding tone of a police officer that I enacted worked well and the driver meekly started driving. He accepted my words and timidly took me to the place where I wanted to alight. When I offered him the fare as per the meter, he politely refused saying he cannot accept it from a police officer. However, when I told him that it was his rightful earning, he accepted and thanked me with a salute.

Another such instance happened in Madras, when we were returning after attending a *Bhajan* programme at Anna

Nagar. We were looking for an auto, and found one standing on the main road. Few drivers were standing there chatting among themselves. The driver of the first auto rickshaw was called to take us to our residence. He refused to do so outright complaining that he would not get a return fare. I told my daughter, Ameeta, to sit in the rickshaw and tried my old trick on the driver. I told him that if he refused to take a retired police officer, he will have to face the consequences and it worked again.

I am religious by nature and hence I always take an opportunity to visit holy places. In my lifetime so far, I have visited a large number of places of worship and offered my service by playing flute. Sri. Manjunath temple (Dharmasthal), Subramanya temple (South Canara), Sri. Ananteshwar temple (Vittal), Sri. Chitrapur Math (Shirali), Sri. Belur Math (Calcutta), Sri. Aadi Shankaracharya temple (Kaladi), Sri. Guruvayurappan temple (Trissur), Tyagaraj Samadhi (Tiruvayyaru), Swami Haridas Samadhi (Brindavan), Sri. Shanta Durga temple (Goa), Uma Maheshwar temple (Mulki), SaiBaba temple (Shirdi) to name a few and atleast another 40-50 more.

Since Pannababuji considered Ustad Abdul Karim Khan of Kirana tradition as the topmost vocalist, I had always held a desire to offer my homage to this great musician. Therefore, during one of my visits to Sangli with Meera and Omkar Gulwadi, I went to the Mazaar of Khan Sahib and started playing flute at about 3.30 p.m. On listening to my flute, the neighbors rushed to take me to a nearby Dargaa of a Peer where Khan Sahib used to sing. We went and offered our homage to the maestro.

Man is basically social by nature and social activity is an integral part of my life. I always relished meeting and associating with various kinds of people and have learnt a lot from them. Memories of my association with them are my eternal wealth.

✦✦✦



Shri. Vasant Desai, the music director of yesteryear, speaking at an Anniversary program of Pannalal Ghosh Memorial Committee, at Podar College Hall, Matunga



In a group of *Vantiga* collectors of Dadar/Matunga Sabha with HH Swami Anandashram of Shri. Chitrapur Math at Matunga (December 1952).



Students of Pannalal Ghosh School on a picnic at Ganeshpuri on 11.2.1975. J.N. Chavan, Gajanan Bhandare, Haripad Chowdhury, Naik, Kothare, myself. Sitting-Vijay Kabhihittal and Kothare



Pratisthapana function of Somnath Mahadev Temple, Gulbai Tekdi, Ahmedabad (October 1973).



At Delhi with then Prime Minister of India, Smt. Indira Gandhi.



Group photo at Gujarathi Stree Mandal Hall, Santacruz after a programme arranged by Maharashtra Kala Mandir, Goregaon (1958)



8.

Pannababuji, the real emerald

Pannababu's contribution to the enrichment of the raga repertoir of north India showed a rare synthesis of tradition and experiment as a result of the Acharya's influence on him. His new creations like Deepavali, Jayant, Chandra-Mauli and Nupur-dhvani, to name a few were marked by structural authenticity and enduring appeal. So were his thematic compositions which he offered us as conductor of National Orchestra of AIR at Delhi. It is important to remember that he had proved his mettle as composer and music director much earlier during his association with Bombay Talkies before he met Acharya Allauddin Khan.

- Mohan D. Nadkarni

(From an article on Pannalal Ghosh in the ToI, dated 31 August 1969)

First glimpse of Pannababuji and training with him

In December 1948, our *Dharmaguru Swamiji* of Chitrapurmath Shrimat Anandashram Swamiji came to Shivaji Park. Every night after *Pooja*, I played the part of *Venuvadya* during *Ashtavadhan Pooja*. Mr. Mohan Nadkarni attended it as well, thus we became close friends. I consider him as my first Guru, as it was from him that I learnt the basics of music like *Swar-Saptak, Raga, Gharana* etc. He inspired me a lot to pursue

my music. I still remember the three compositions set in *Yaman*, *Pooriya* and *Darbari* in *Teentaal* that he taught which I played for *Swamiji*. Pt. S.C.R. Bhat also performed there and was in the audience to listen to me. He suggested that I should learn from Pt. Pannalal Ghosh who was a renowned flute maestro. I told him that I have heard a lot about him but I was a novice and was apprehensive to go to him. He excitedly added that Pannalalji was a very nice person and would be happy to teach me. This encouraged me and I mentioned to Mohan Nadkarni about approaching him in my next meeting. He cautioned me and said that I must have reasonable knowledge of classical music before I go to him for advanced training. So, I looked out for other music classes. Mr. Telang (who owned a music class near Dadar station) introduced me to Mr. J.P. Mohile (Anil Mohile's father), but he played straight flute which I was not very keen to learn.

It was on 12th of February 1949, when I got my first chance to meet Pannababuji. I read in the newspaper that Pt. Pannalal Ghosh was to give a flute recital that day after a lecture by Swami Nikhilananda of Ramakrishna Mission, Chicago, at Theosophical Society hall at Opera House. I was desperately looking for such an opportunity and luckily it was a Saturday, being a half working day. Although the programme was to start at 5 p.m., I left office at 2 p.m. and reached the venue much ahead of time. I was the only soul sitting there till the **hustle** and **bustle** began around 4 pm. I could hardly register the goings-on since I was eagerly waiting for Pannalalji. He came around 4.30 pm, wearing a spotless white Dhoti and Kurta, holding the flute box. I could not muster the courage to meet him then, and went inside the hall and occupied a chair. The spiritual talk could not interest me at that age; my eyes were all the time focused on Pannalalji who was sitting in the front row.

After some time he came out to have a smoke. I immediately rushed out to meet him. I simply stood there and said, "*Namaskar*! My name is Karnad. I wanted to meet you because I want to learn flute from you. Please excuse me for approaching you directly, because I do not have anyone's reference". Out of nervousness I forgot even to touch his feet. To my surprise he said "Why should you come through somebody? I am also a person like you. You have actually done a good thing by coming and meeting me directly and not through somebody. Otherwise,

you would have a wrong impression about me in your mind. Also it would have taken longer for you to reach me. I am going home after my recital and will be performing tomorrow at Sri. Ramakrishna Ashram at Khar. You may come there around 7 pm and we can have a detailed talk before the programme". I got totally hypnotized with his words. I became too restless even to sleep. I went there to meet him one hour early the next day, since I could think of nothing else. He came along with his wife and daughter.

"Sir, I had met you yesterday...." I approached and said.

"Yes, yes, I know" he replied. "But now, you do one thing. I am busy for a week or so, due to an assignment in films. Afterwards when I am not busy, you come with your flute to Malad. Take a train from Dadar to Malad, pay 8 annas to the *tangawala* and ask him to take you to Pannalal Ghosh's residence. He will reach you to the place where I stay".

We fixed our first meeting for an afternoon on a weekend which was mutually convenient. I was literally counting the days. I was overwhelmed by the fact that Pannababuji has actually agreed to consider me as his student. That day, I went to him with my small Carnatic style flute with 8 holes. He made me comfortable by offering a seat and asked "Have you brought your flute?" I said "Yes" and showed him the flute. He asked me to play something, probably because he wanted to check my grip and blowing style. I played a small piece in *raag Maru Bihag*, which I had picked up from an orchestra composed by Pt. G. S. Ratnakar Bhat of Mangalore during their annual *Rama-Navami* festival. Pannababuji took the flute from my hand and played *Maru Bihag* on it. And what a difference it made! He played that tiny flute most tenderly, despite his hefty figure and long fingers! Then he enquired about where I worked and resided, how I spent my spare time etc. I told him frankly "I belong to a middle class family and have recently come to the city from a village. Each one of us brothers has to share the responsibility to run our house at native place and provide for our sister's marriage etc". He then asked, "How many hours will you be able to practice?" I said, "How many do I need to?" "At least 3 hrs," he said and I readily agreed. He further added that I would have to practice very regularly and if I didn't, even for a day, he would know. I promised myself that I would practice regularly and never disappoint him.

These interactions were encouraging and I saw a sort of parental affection in his eyes. But I was worried about the fees and whether I will be able to afford it. Those days I was unable to spare even Rs 50 per month and also didn't want to be a burden to anybody. It must have been evident on my face, which he guessed accurately and said, "Look, I don't run a commercial music class like others, so I won't charge you anything. I will teach you if I am at home when you come. Whatever I teach will be sufficient for your practice for 4-5 months. The technique and art of flute playing are not as simple as we think. Even if I am not at home, don't waste your time. Mataji will be around, have a cup of tea and sit for practice." I was elated to hear these words.

He then asked me to bring a flute with 7 holes required for his style of playing. So the search began and to my surprise it turned out to be quite a difficult project. My conversational skills being limited to *Konkani* and English, it was an additional constraint. I went to 'Haribhau Vishwanath' first and then to many others, but could not find it. By chance I met Pt. Taranath Rao at 'H. Ramarao and Sons' on Sandhurst Road. He directed me to the music shop of Mr. Malpekar, since he could converse in Konkani which would possibly help. Mr. Malpekar guided me to Mr. Limaye, who was a renowned flute maker and also taught playing flute in Prof. B.R. Deodhar's class at Opera House. Mr. Limaye did not have a suitable bamboo at that time. Hence he made a small flute from an ordinary bamboo, used for making brooms, by scrapping and polishing the outer surface. It was tuned to 'black-II' high pitch. He charged me Rs. 5 for it which was a big amount those days. I took it to Pannababuji. He played it and certified that it was tuned properly and wanted to know who made it and he started playing the notes.

Then I asked him, "What time shall I come every day" he replied, "*Kya tum paagal ho, jo roj Shivaji Park se aana chahate ho*? Have you got that much time? When will you practice? So don't come everyday. You may come twice a week and go to Devendra Murdeshwar and practice with him the rest of the days". This was the beginning of my training with the maestro.

The first thing he explained was about the posture, which should be straight. He further explained how to hold the flute and play it with the fingertips. He also explained that playing

with the fingertips facilitates mainly in two ways. Firstly, one can use longer flute for producing notes with sonorous tonal quality. Secondly, the higher sensitivity of the fingertips can be effectively used to produce fine or flat notes with sliding movements. Later he started teaching me *Paltaa* (*Alankar*) and then *Raagdari*.

As per Pannababuji's advice, to save the time in travelling, I used to go to Devendra Murdeshwar's place at Santacruz for practice, and eventually we became good friends.

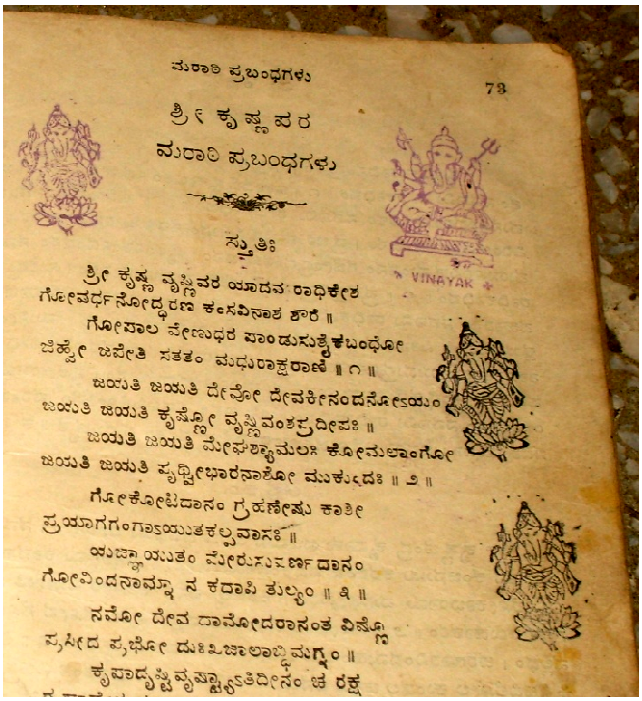
I must make a mention of all the friends who helped my flute practice in the early phase. Mr. Thonse Gopinath Rao, Mr. Ganesh S. Savnal (student of Pt. Nikhil Ghosh), Mr. Amembal Manohar (nephew of D' Amel) affectionately used to accompany me on Tabla during practice sessions.

Mr. Mohan D. Nadkarni (working with State Bank of India) and Mr. Shreeram Joshi observed that I had no proper place to practice the flute and kindly offered that I do it in their homes. I gladly accepted the offer and frequently visited their homes for flute practice.

I wanted to have a good flute made for myself. But the bamboos of desired quality were only available in Bengal according to Pannababuji. My brother used to go to Calcutta but could not bring any bamboos since he knew nothing about it. I remembered having seen a variety of bamboos in the forest near our village in Western Ghats. So, when I went to my native place on one month's leave in December 1949, I went to "Ujre" near Dharamasthal and brought a large number (30-40 pieces) of big bamboos from the forest, since I did not know which ones were suitable. After coming back, in January 1950, I took the whole box to Pannababuji. When I opened it, I found that some pieces had shrunk and cracked, since they were not mature and processed properly. Pannababuji was surprised that such big bamboos were also available in my native place. When I left the lot with Pannababuji, he asked "Are you not taking them back?" I replied that I had brought all of them only for him. Pannababuji was quite taken in with my sincerity and eventually developed high confidence in me. His earlier experience with people was quite different. They started boasting about being Pannababuji's student, after just a few lessons and happily took away the flute



My parents – Shri. Karnad Ganesh Sunder Rao and Smt. Shantabai



ಮರಾಠಿ ಪ್ರಬಂಧಗಳು 73

ಶ್ರೀ ಕೃಷ್ಣಪರ

ಮರಾಠಿ ಪ್ರಬಂಧಗಳು

ಸ್ತುತಿ

ಶ್ರೀ ಕೃಷ್ಣ ವೃಷ್ಣಿಕುಲ ಯಾದವ ರಾಧಿಕೇಶ
ಗೋವರ್ಧನೋದ್ಧರಣ ಕಂಸವಿನಾಶ ಶೌರೆ ॥
ಗೋಪಾಲ ವೇಣುಧರ ಪಾಂಡುಸುಖೈಕಬಂಧೋ
ಜಿಹ್ವೇ ಜಪೇತಿ ಸತತಂ ಮಧುರಾಕ್ಷರಾಣಿ ॥ ೧ ॥

ಜಯತಿ ಜಯತಿ ದೇವೋ ದೇವಕೀನಂದನೋಽಯಂ
ಜಯತಿ ಜಯತಿ ಕೃಷ್ಣೋ ವೃಷ್ಣಿವಂಶಪ್ರದೀಪಃ ॥
ಜಯತಿ ಜಯತಿ ಮೇಘಶ್ಯಾಮಲಃ ಕೋಮಲಾಂಗೋ
ಜಯತಿ ಜಯತಿ ಪೃಥ್ವೀಭಾರನಾಶೋ ಮುಕುಂದಃ ॥ ೨ ॥

ಗೋಕೋಟಿದಾನಂ ಗ್ರಹಣೇಷು ಕಾಶ್ಯೀ
ಪ್ರಯಾಗಗಂಗಾಕಯುತಕಲ್ಪವಾಸಃ ॥
ಯಜ್ಞಾಯುತಂ ಮೇರುಸುವರ್ಣದಾನಂ
ಗೋವಿಂದನಾಮ್ನಾ ನ ಕದಾಪಿ ತುಲ್ಯಂ ॥ ೩ ॥

ನಮೋ ದೇವ ದಾಮೋದರಾನಂತ ವಿಷ್ಣೋ
ಪ್ರಸೀದ ಪ್ರಭೋ ದುಃಖಜಾಲಾಬ್ಧಿಮಗ್ನಂ ॥
ಕೃಪಾದೃಷ್ಟಿವೃಷ್ಟ್ಯಾತಿದೀನಂ ಚ ರಕ್ಷ

Impressions from the wooden stamps I made during school days



My flutes – Long base flutes are on both sides

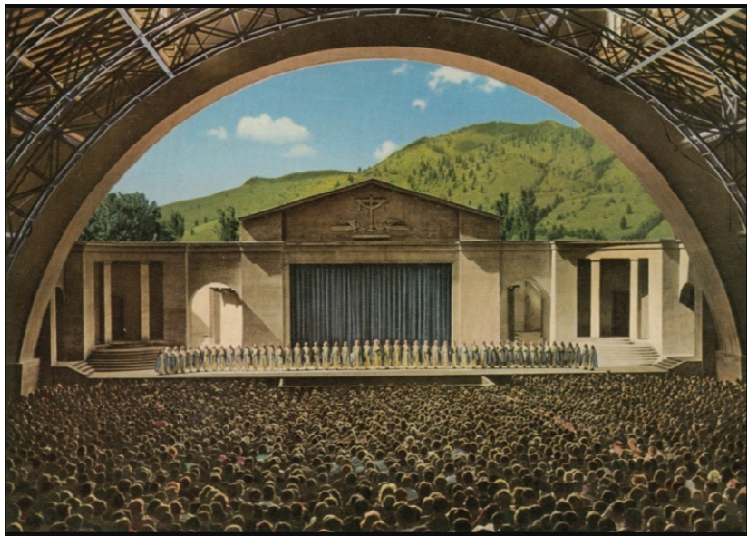


Babuji lived here in Malad, Bombay





Pannalal Ghosh’s flute box and the flutes



The open air theatre of Oberamargao, Germany,
where the famous Fashion Play is held once every 10 years.



With Ms. Marie Booth when she visited our Borivli home
after both of us retired (1985).



Devendra Murdeshwar and me with Mintooda (middle) at Dhaka (August 1986).



Awarding ‘Saraswat Bharanam’ by Swami Shri. Sadyojat Shankarashram of Shri. Chitrapur Math Samsthan, Shirali at Pune (3-9-2000).



With Pt. Dinkar Kaikini during a felicitation programme by Canara Union, Bangalore (2000)



Blessings from Pt. Smt Gangubai Hanagal (2008)

he made. He was hence forced to become strict about giving away flutes/bamboos freely.

After a couple of months he told Harudada, who stayed with Babuji, to bring a very good Burma bamboo from his stock which was kept in a loft above the bathroom. He told Devendra to make a flute for me with a pitch of 'white 4'. Once made, I started putting in even more practice. I still have it in my flute box as my prized possession. In 1952, when Devendra was working in Delhi, Pannababuji had nobody to accompany him on his 'Black 2' pitch. So he found a piece of a bamboo from his stock and requested Mohan Nadkarni to make a 'Black-2' flute for me. The bamboo was short by about 1-2". Hence Mohandada prepared a very good flute after joining another matching piece to it. I switched over to this 'Black2' flute and have been playing it for the last 58 years!

In April or May 1952, Pt. Yashawantrai Purohit (of Kirana gharana) had organized a programme in their music circle at Sikkanagar (Girgaon). Pannababuji was invited to perform there. On the previous day of the programme he told me to bring my flute to accompany him. I said that I am practicing on 'black-2' for hardly a couple of months. But he insisted nevertheless and assured that I need not worry because he would play *Yaman* to make it easy for me. I gathered some courage with his considerate attitude. He started his recital with a *vilambit gat* in *jhumara taal*. After 2-3 rounds he looked at me hinting that I should play. I was taken by surprise, but had to comply in front of the audience. When I reached the *Sam* accurately, the audience applauded and Pannababuji also appreciated it. I realised that he had intentionally made me play alone to make me confident. He followed *Yaman* with *Bihag* which was a technically simple raga again and made me comfortable. While returning he said, "You played well. Henceforth you should accompany me." I had no stage fear since my school days, but Pannababuji made me feel at home on stage.

After my marriage, I was going to Pannababuji only twice a week since I had to commute all the way from King Circle. In due course, I started going to him frequently since he needed somebody to give accompaniment on 'sur-peti' during his practice and on flute during his concerts. Those days, unlike today, there were no electronic instruments available. The mechanical '*sur-peti*' available those days, produced by Gore Brothers, Belgaum,

was quite a fine instrument and a very sleek model which appeared just like a book. It used to sound like *Tanpura* and playing it was difficult. Pannababuji's disciples were given very good training to play it and later were trained to play it simultaneously with *Tanpura*.

I used to reach his house by about 8.30 pm. We would first have a cup of tea followed by his smoke and then start the practice. *Tabla* accompaniment was mostly by Nikhilbabu, otherwise we used a Metronome for rhythm. But the practice was very regular. I used to play both, *Surpeti* and *Tanpura* with him. He insisted that we listen to him play carefully before practicing. If we had any doubt, we would ask him and he would immediately clear them. This was his way of teaching us. Today, music is taught in classes where several students practice together and it is impossible to find who is making a mistake, so rectifying it is out of question!

Since I was very regular, he used to get anxious if I could not go. He used to send a message with Devendra or Chaudharybabu, to find why I had not come. If he came to know that I was sick, he used to tell me that I must be very careful about health. Our last train from Malad used to be at midnight. At 11.45 pm he would tell us to leave since his house was at 20 minutes' walking distance from the station. But we used to remain engrossed in listening and would not stir. Finally at 11.50 he would keep the flute down. Thereafter Devendra and I would start running to catch the train. We would catch the train just in time, sit in a small bogie where no one came, and practice. Devendra used to alight at Santacruz and I used to go to Dadar and then to Shivaji Park at about 1.00 am. I would be very hungry and thirsty by then and used to drink a lot of water from the municipal tap and go to bed. At about 6 in the morning, I used to go to the terrace, sit facing a corner and practice in a low tone by half blowing, so as not to disturb others. This was my daily routine and I used to practice one hour in the morning and two hours in the evening. I had a notebook for recording the time for daily practice. On an average it would be at least 3 hours a day as I had promised to Pannababuji.

During the 11-12 years of my association with him, I never saw him lose his temper. He would play some *Taankari* for me which I would try to reproduce. If I did not follow it correctly, he

would play it once, twice, thrice. And if still I was unable to reproduce it correctly, he would just smile and say, "*Tum paagal*", but would never be angry. Our relationship was growing stronger by the day.

There came a time when Pannababuji lost his sense of hearing and became stone-deaf. He was very upset one day and told me "I can't teach you anyway, so why are you visiting me everyday?" I said "I do not know why, but I feel so peaceful by just looking at you, that I feel like coming to see you everyday." I saw how miserable he felt without listening to music, as if life was no more interesting for him. One day when he was sitting in the room near the kitchen he told me to play a small and shrill flute with full force very close to his ears. He wanted to check whether his hearing was gone for ever. Mataji also agreed and told me to try it. I played for about 5 minutes. He told me to continue and I played for 10-15 minutes. Then he said, "I am happy, my sense of hearing is not gone completely. I can hear the sound of the flute as if it is played few yards away. You were playing *Yaman*, right?" He was absolutely correct. He regained his hearing after a few days and was relieved.

His system of teaching was very nice. He always said that playing with fast tempo is not that difficult. But in the slow tempo, where one has to demonstrate the correct '*shruti*', as per the specific requirement of each *raga*, it is imperative to pay maximum attention to precision. e.g. the *komal rishabh* of *Pooriya* is slightly lower, *and* that in *Marwa* is slightly raised. Also the *rishabh* in *Shree* evolves from *Sa*, in *Pooriya* it appears as *Ni-Re-Sa* and in *Pooriya-Dhanashri* as *Ni-Re-Ni*. So the same note invokes different feelings in different *raga* depending on its *shruti* and the structure of the phrase. The quality of *Re* should be very correct, and only then one can get the feeling of that *Raga*. That emotion can come only if you play slowly. That's why he used to say, "You must play in a tempo as slow as you can." In faster tempo the listener may not be able to judge whether the note was played correctly.

Pannababuji said that the more you practice the *palta*; the earlier you would gain proficiency over the instrument or on the vocal cords while singing. It is necessary to practice the *Palta* (*Alankar*) in order to train the fingers so that they readily obey the orders of the brain. And these *Palta*s and their combinations make up the *Taankari* and *Layakari*. That's why he emphasized

on rigorous practice of the *Palta*s.

He insisted that the phrases in *Aaroha* and *Avaroha* should be in 8 parts each, since it becomes 1/2 of *Tritaal* and thus can be practised in proper rhythm. If, for example, it is a 3 notes phrase, it should start from *mandra dhaivat* e.g. *Dha-Ni-Sa, Ni-Sa-Re*..... in *aaroha*. *Avroha* should start from *teevra gandhar* e.g. *Ga-Re-Sa, Re-Sa-Ni*.... This forms a balanced pattern of 4 plus 4 in both *Aaroha* and *Avaroha*. Otherwise it will make an odd combination of 4 plus 3 which would not fit in a smooth rhythm. He felt that even practice should be pleasing to the ears.

i.e. [Sa, Re, Ga, Ma,] [Pa, Dha, Ni, Sa,] 4 + 4 = 8

[Sa, Ni, Dha, Pa,] [Ma, Ga, Re, Sa,] 4 + 4 = 8

And in contrast, the real *Saptaka* (without *Taar Sa*) remains imbalanced

i.e. [Sa, Re, Ga, Ma,] [Pa, Dha, Ni ,] 4 + 3 = 7

[Ni, Dha, Pa,] [Ma, Ga, Re, Sa,] 3 + 4 = 7

For attaining mastery over the instrument, Pannababuji used to tell that one should also practice the *palta* starting from the lowest note on the flute till the uppermost one and reverse, without considering the balanced rhythm as mentioned above.

He also had mastery over producing *Ati-Taar* notes. Normally one can produce up to *Ati-Taar madhyam*, but I have heard him play even the *Ati-Taar Pancham*. A very powerful, controlled blow and a different fingering technique is required for it, and this can be heard in some of his recordings. Up to *Mandra Gandhar* he used to play without any difficulty, and I am told that sometimes he used to reach *Mandra Rishabh* also by tilting the flute inside. But the notes below *Mandra Shudha Gandhar* are not clearly audible and hence are played very rarely.

Pannababuji used to generally play *Pooriya-Dhanashree, Marwa, Shree, Pooriya, Kedara, Tilak-Kaamod, Sindura, Khamaj, Kafee, Piloo, Malkauns, Darbari, Shankara,* and *Miyan Malhar* in the concerts. I was really surprised with his mastery on *Shankara*. He produced the Pa^Ga *Meend* in *Shankara* with great aplomb. It is very difficult for me to explain that technique. But he did not avoid that *Meend*, he had such a good command over the blow that he could easily play it. He used to also play *Bhoop* and

Shudh Kalyan. He had beautiful compositions in these *Raga*s. He also used to play the *Raga* such as *Todi, Bhoopal Todi, Bhairav, Ahir Bhairav, Brindabani Sarang, Shudh Sarang, Madhuvantee,* and *Multanee*. He could play so many of them, but *Darbari* and especially, *Bihag* were his favourite. And I do not think any flautist can play *Bihag* of Pannababuji's level. In fact he could play any *Raga* with command. He also played some of the South Indian *Raga* such as *Abhogee, Hansdhwanee* and *Malay Marut*. The wealth of knowledge he had was incredible. Pannababuji used to tell us "*Beta, tum saree zindgi main ek raag bajaawo, lekin aise bajawo ki sunnewale kahenge ki kya bajaya hai*!" This is very important.

He had a unique style of playing flute. He used to pick up any piece from a *Sitar, Sarod* or Violin and play it. He openly appreciated anything good in any performance and used to tell us that "*Sub se bada Guru Kaan*. If you listen to any good phrases, idioms pick them up straight away and develop further". This kind of advice is rare to come from a *guru*. According to him the last word in melody was Ustaad Abdul Karim Khan.

Although he was not rigid about sticking to a particular *Gharana* (tradition or school), knowingly or unknowingly he himself pioneered an altogether new *Gharana* for the first time in Hindusthani classical flute playing.

Before starting the programme, he used to give due respect to the instrument. Then he used to consider first 3 blowings as "*Omkar*." This used to be followed by blowing the *Mantra-Jap* on flute which he received from his Swami. I thought for quite some time that he was adjusting the flute, which was actually his *Mantra-Japa*. Then he would play the *Swara* like Sa ~~~ Ni~~ in a slow tempo and then continue. This was his style to begin the concert. He would never appear to be in a hurry. He used to develop the *Alap* slowly and then the *Vilambit* tempo. He was very strict in following the *Asthai-Antara-Abhog-Sanchari* pattern. His playing was very systematic. If you listen to his recordings, same style is noticed, which he learnt from Baba Allaudinkhan Sahib. Any instrumentalist who has received proper training from Baba's *gharana* will never be repetitive and the performance will be very enjoyable. While playing, the speed/tempo/rhythm increases gradually till the end, which is the proper style. By following this pattern the artist can take the audience with him.

He had an amazing knowledge about *Raga, Tabla, Sur, Laya,* in fact about every aspect of Indian classical music. If anybody has an impression that Pannababuji was not proficient in rhythm, it is absolutely wrong. He was close to Ustaad Amir Hussain Khan, the *tabla* wizard in those days, who lived in Kalyan building, at Bombay Central. Amir Hussain Khan had a large family and his house was never quiet. Hence Gurujee used to invite him to his home at Malad and make him stay. Pannababuji then used to make him practice *Tabla* and listen to it carefully. This way he absorbed a lot about *Tabla*. Pannababuji used to exhibit all the *Tala* oriented patterns such as *Chakradar, Tihai,* and *Tukda* in the concerts with great precision, and their reproduction used to be very difficult for other *Tabala* players. His command over *taal* was appreciated by *Ustaad Amir Khan* in his tribute to Pannababuji in Indian Merchant's Chamber (September, 1960). His words were, "If you hear any artist presenting a raga in *Vilambit Zumra*, it had to be either Pt. Pannalal Ghosh on the flute or myself." He further mentioned that the style both of them followed was *Kirana* style. Pannababuji's and Amir Khan's *Aalap* were quite similar. I have heard him playing in many *Talas* such as *Vilambit* in *Zumra, Tilwada, Ada Choutal, Zaptaal, Ektal, Teental,* and even the *Dhrupad/Dhamar*. Pannababuji would also play the Carnatic style of classical music on his flute, and enthral the audience.

In the latter part of his life, I had taken Pt. Taranath Rao (student of Ustad Shamsuddin Khan) to him. Taranathji then continued to visit Pannababuji and the two of them would sit together for practice; discuss percussion part of music *Layakari*, etc. These discussions made me realize that Pannababuji was not an ordinary artist.

He had a mellifluous voice. Several times he used to demonstrate by singing and used to explain how it should be reproduced on flute. In comparison to vocal music, the instruments have inherent positive as well as negative points. He always agreed that vocal music is the ultimate thing. Sometimes he used to make me sing *Carnataki Raga*, and pass a comment, "Karnad, you should have been a vocalist, why did you choose flute?"

At times he used to make me play and he would follow me. He used to contribute by way of *Taankari, Layakari* etc. and

together it would make a beautiful picture. He would not show on the stage that he was my *Guru* and I was his disciple, but as if it was a *Jugalbandi* (duet). He had that kind of sportive spirit. I can never forget those sweet memories.

A *Guru* tests his disciple- then he teaches him, then their relationship develops. In one situation, *Guru* may act like a *Chela*, not from the learning point of view but for the affection for his pupil. I experienced it with Pannababuji.

I do not know whether he had any experience of *Sitar* playing, however, he had a few very good friends who were Sitar players. Pt. Nikhil Banerjee and Mr. Sudhanshu Bhattachayra (student of Ustaad Ali Akbar Khan, who stayed in Ramakrishna Mission) were regular visitors to his place.

Mataji had impressed upon me that accompaniment is an art by itself. Primarily it should fill up the gaps when appropriate, complimenting the main artist's style, without disturbing his/ her mood and flow.

Pannababuji got convinced with my proficiency on a bigger flute made by Devendra and felt that I should accompany him in concerts. As mentioned earlier he got a suitable flute (D-sharp pitch) made for me by Mr. Mohan D. Nadkarni. Within a couple of months I got a good hold over the instrument and started practicing even harder, so much so that due to lack of adequate sleep (1 - 6 am) and nourishment I became very thin. Mr. Mohan Nadkarni (music critic) even cautioned me that at this rate I might fall prey to the attack of tuberculosis!

My first accompaniment to Pannababuji was in the music circle programme arranged by Mr. Yeshwantrai Purohit at Sikka Nagar, C.P. Tank, Bombay. I have given the details about it earlier. I had the opportunity to accompany him in most of his recitals right from 1952 to 1956 till he went to Delhi, but never kept an account of it.

Pannababuji's flute beginnings

I have been told this story about how Pannababuji developed an interest in flute. Pannababuji's father, Mr. Akshaykumar Ghosh was a government servant, at Barisal, in East Bengal and used to play Sitar as a hobby. Pannababuji's real name was Amal

Jyoti Ghosh, and was fondly called by family as "Pannalal". Young Panna used to go to a rivulet called Kirtantola, with his friends for a swim. The rivulet Kirtantola runs just a few meters from his place. One day he found a flute floating in the river and started playing it out of curiosity. Slowly he developed an interest in flute. He used to gather the children near "*Pukur*" (a water tank) and the boys used to encourage him to play the flute. It became a passion with him later.

The story of his migration to Calcutta, the version I have heard from Nikhil Babu goes like this. During his time in Barisal, free talk about independence was taken as an offence by the British government. Those who indulged in it were threatened by the police. On one such occasion a scuffle took place between Pannababuji and a police constable and a fist fight took place. The police fell unconscious and during that night the news of his death reached Pannababuji. He had to go underground, that is why he left Barisal in a hurry and came to Calcutta straightaway.

His life in Calcutta was full of struggle. He tried to do several jobs. He was a good boxer, wrestler and an athlete, and for some time used to teach boxing in an *Akhada*. It used to earn him money and he could continue practicing flute simultaneously. A friend suggested that he should try his luck in the New Theatres, and fortunately he got selected for playing flute for the films. There, he learnt Harmonium from Master Khushi Mohammad, who was a very good Harmonium player. These were possibly his first lessons in classical music. Then he got an opportunity to meet Pt. Girija Shankar Chakravarty, who was a famous classical vocalist and Guru of Pt. Tarapada Chakravarty and started learning from him. These lessons in vocal classical, learnt from Pt. Chakravarty was the foundation on which his flute music career was built.

Much later in life Pannababuji went to Baba Alauddin Khan for learning. Baba used to play on *Sarod* and as he developed the *Raag*, Pannababuji used to reproduce it on the flute. Pannababuji acquired a tinge of Sarod in his flute playing style, due to this training. He also picked up the staccato style usually played on *Sarod* and *Sitar* as *Jhala*. His playing style thus incorporated *Sarod* and *Sitar* into the flute due to which his solo recitals became rich and colourful. His style was distinct mainly

because of these enrichments from *gaayaki ang* as well as *sitar* and *sarod*.

After learning from Baba, Pannababuji realized that some of the *Thaat* were very difficult to play on the flute. Thus, when I was being trained under him, I always saw him practising *Raga Todee* in the morning and *Raga Pooriya-Dhanashree* in the evening. These *Raaga* have *Komal Swaras* and their combinations are difficult to play. Hence when he taught us, he began with *Kalyan Thaat* which is played by just closing or opening all the holes fully, followed by *Bilawal* (in which one hole is needed to be closed partly to produce *Shuddha Madhym*), *Khamaj, Marwa, Poorvi, Bhairav, Aasawaree, Todee* and finally *Bhairavee*, in this sequence. This way, he made us practice all the 10 *Thaat*, stage by stage, for training the fingers. He emphasized that music should be appealing to both the artist as well as the audience, whether it is while practicing or performing.

A story I have heard about his mastery on *gaayki* style was that in one of the conferences in Allahabad, Pt. Omkarnath Thakur was to sing. Pannababuji requested that he be allowed to accompany him on the flute. Omkarnathjee wondered whether it was possible, and Pannababuji said that he would like to try. He agreed and they sat for a rehearsal. Pt. Omkarnath was quite impressed, and hence took him for accompaniment on the stage.

Pannababuji's experiments with flute

The small flute being used those days had high pitch which could not do justice to the essence of Raga like *Pooriya*, *Darbari* or *Miyan Malhar* because of its shrillness. So, he got some bamboos from Hooghli River, and started experimenting on the size of the flute sometime around 1935, when he was in Calcutta. This experimentation required assistance and luckily his students were there to help him. Just extending the length would not help. Increase in the size of flute meant choosing longer bamboo with proportionately wider diameter. And the distance between the holes had to be optimized by trial and error. On the other hand, the length could not be increased beyond a point, in order to allow the fluent finger movements. So, after much experimentation he standardized a size of D sharp (i.e. black 2, about 32 inches long), which was used in the film music those days. He used to also give his concerts with D sharp flute. Then

he realized that he could improvise it further by boring an additional hole towards the open end, so he could make use of even the little finger. He tried to bore it, not in the line of all these 6 holes, but lower by about ½ inch, so that the little finger could easily reach it. He found this 7th hole very useful for adding a bit of ornamentation in his phrases. After trials on several bamboo pieces he eventually ended up making the longest flute on which it was physically possible to play wider range of Ragas especially those delving in the bass range. Eventually these ragas became his speciality.

In the Hindustani classical music, *Shadja* and *Pancham* are considered as the stand alone (*Achal*) notes, meaning they do not vary. On a flute with 6 holes, continuity between *teevra Madhyam* and *Pancham* cannot be maintained, which is essential for retaining the beauty of the phrases like "Pa-Ma-Dha-Pa-Ma-Pa". Pannababuji solved this problem by adding the 7th hole to be played with the little finger. The beauty of the Ragas with *teevra Madhyam*, such as *Yaman*, *Bihag*, *Kedar*, *Shudha Sarang*, *Pooriya*, *Marwa*, *Shree*, etc. could be conveyed satisfactorily. He used the 7th hole for the subtle ornamentation. Not only that, but the utility of the 7th hole is of critical importance for playing the *Shuddha Madhyam* by tilting inwards, especially in the *Poorvangpradhan Raga* such as *Darbari*, *Miyan Malhar*, *Malkauns*, etc.

His research continued and he thought of introducing the bass notes in flute so he could play them in the *Raga* like *Darbari*, *Pooriya* etc. He took a long bamboo with larger bore and made a bass flute with only 4 holes. But the playing style for this flute was different – he would come up to bass *Pancham* with the usual flute and then swiftly switch over to the bass flute, to play the bass notes up to *Shadja* and even a couple of notes below that. In his popular AIR national recording of *Darbari* the bass *Shadja* can be heard clearly.

Later he had an idea to design a bass flute on which both, the middle and bass octaves could be played easily. This could not materialise during his lifetime for want of that long bamboo without node. I managed to implement it later with satisfaction. This flute has a very nice tonal quality. While playing this flute all the 6 fingers have to be used. Pannababuji's innovative nature made him design a flute which could satisfy his intellect for

playing the Hindusthani classical music up to his satisfaction and to that of his audience. His greatest contribution to flute music was to make a flute which could bring out finer nuances of classical music because of the seventh hole.

Pannababuji's entry into Bombay

Chaudharibabu who was associated with New Theatres in Calcutta came to Bombay in 1938, and found that there were good opportunities for flautists in the film industry. After settling down he brought Pannababuji to Bombay in 1940. In Bombay, first they stayed in a place opposite K.E.M. hospital in Parel.

Pannababuji's wife belonged to a very well known family of singers and had a melodious voice. In Bombay it was she who came across the first job opportunity. Smt. Saraswati Devi, who was a music director in Bombay Talkies, was trying out popularization of playback singing. She had artists like Amirbai Karnataki and Shamshad Begum in her mind. Parul Ghosh was also called for an audition test. She passed it easily and was hired by Bombay Talkies on the salary of Rs. 1000 per month in 1940.

Bombay Talkies was located at Malad and both of them found it very difficult to commute from Parel every day. Hence they rented a house in Malad which became their permanent abode from 1941 onwards. The house was on Gavthan Road. The road is named after him today. Here Pannababuji could peacefully focus on his practice. The effort for daily commute was saved; the earnings were secured by Mataji's job, as well as from his film assignments. Mataji extended her full support and encouragement to Pannababuji.

Pannababuji's urge to reach the ultimate depth of classical music

In 1947, he had a feeling that he should get some more training in music. Although he could play proficiently, he felt the need for improvising the presentation part. He was quite impressed by the performance of Baba Allauddin Khan of *Maihar Gharana*. His style was impressive, without being repetitive and the development of *Raaga* was gradual. Pannababuji thought that he would benefit from training under him. Those days Baba resided at Borivali (East) near Railway Station. Pannababuji went to him, touched his feet and said, "Baba, I have come to learn

from you." Baba was a nice person at heart but was also known for his short temper. Baba said in Bengali, "Who are you?" Pannababuji said "I am Pannalal Ghosh." "Do you play flute?" "Yes". "Who is the famous Pannalal who performs in big concerts?" "That is me." "Then what are you going to get from me?" "Baba, I do play, but when I heard your performance I knew I have a lot to improve. I feel I must learn from you. And till you say 'yes' I won't' leave your feet". Baba softened and agreed to teach. Pannababuji continued to learn from him for about one and half years.

Pannababuji's personality and nature

Pannababuji had an impressive personality. When I went to Delhi for my first AIR recording, some of the AIR artists asked me "Are you Pannalal Ghosh's disciple"? "Yes" I said. They said that they could make out from the way I was sitting, walking and playing. I used to wear *Kurta* and *Pyjama* before meeting Pannababuji. But after I started accompanying him, I started wearing *Dhotee* and *Kurta* just like *Gurujee*, and somehow also started copying his walking style, which was very majestic. In Delhi people used to say – whenever he came for conducting the orchestra or during a programme, the whole stage used to be filled by his presence.

His nature was very humble and kind. He never looked stern on stage or shot angry glances at the accompanying artists or showed displeasure in any way. He used to be very friendly with all the accompanists. Once on the stage, his performance was like an offering to the Goddess Sharada. He never revealed the strain he was undergoing while playing. His face used to portray absolute peace and tranquillity as if he was in a different world. Nowadays artists are seen contorting their faces and making unnecessary body movements while performing on stage.

By nature he was very sincere and would not spend valuable time on idle gossip. He would go on social visit only upon invitation. And once there, he would be eager to return home and resume his practice. At home, he was a warm host and used to welcome everybody, irrespective of their social or artistic stature. He had a way of making them very comfortable at his home. If the artist was a vocalist, he would accompany him on the Harmonium, and listen carefully. He would play flute only if they insisted, and would never thrust his skills with flute on them.

He was a soft-spoken person, at the core. He never strived for publicity. Also he was generous by nature. If somebody came to him for fixing a programme and asked about his expectations, Pannababuji would reply, “How much can you pay?” They would say, “Our music circle is poor...” “Ok, pay whatever you can.” Those days I did not see him getting more than Rs. 300 per program and even in the later days people paid only Rs. 1000.

I remember an episode to exemplify his generosity. Once there was a concert of classical music (vocal and instrumental) to observe the death anniversary of the great musician and dramatist, late Pt. Dinanath Mangeshkar, arranged by his daughter, Smt. Lata Mangeshkar. It was held at Bombay Film Laboratories, near Portuguese Church at Dadar. Renowned artists participated in the event and Pannababuji was one of them. As usual I accompanied him on the *Tanpura*. Ustad Bade Gulam Ali Khan, after his recital, came to the room behind the stage to have tea and Smt. Lataji offered him an envelope and he politely accepted. When Pannababuji came to the room to have tea after hi performance and Lataji offered him an envelope, he politely asked what it was about. She told Pannababuji that it was just a token of love. Pannababuji replied, “If it contains money, I cannot accept it. My recital was a token of love and respect to the great artiste. It was your kindness that you arranged for the transport from Malad to Dadar and back which was a great help to me. I feel honoured that I got a chance to pay homage to this great artiste”.

Another instance that I remember was when Mr. Brijnarayan of Sur Singar Samsad had arranged a music festival in Azad Maidan opposite Metro theatre in a huge tent. Pannababuji’s program was fixed. He sent a big questionnaire to Pannababuji to be filled before the concert. As per that, the artist was not supposed to perform 15 days earlier and later, and he should be punctual etc. Pannababuji filled the form and returned. I accompanied him for that concert. But we found that there were hardly 20-25 people in the tent. Those comprised of known artists like Smt. Gangubai Hangal and many others. The programme was over and Pannababuji was not paid the amount of Rs. 300 as per the agreement. Perhaps the collection was not sufficient. We returned and Pannababuji never said anything about the money. Pannababuji never told anyone about this incident but

it became known only when Brijnarayanji wrote about it in a newspaper after Pannababuji's demise. After a year or so after that music festival, Pannababuji and Brijnarayan happened to travel together in 1st class bogie towards Delhi. In that Frontier mail Brij Narayan asked Pannababuji in Hindi, "*Babuji, do you recognize me*?" Pannababuji replied "No". Then Brij Narayan said "I am the same Brij Narayan of Sur Singar Samsad, who arranged the music festival at Dhobi Talav Maidan and booked your programme. But I failed to pay the remuneration of Rs. 300 as promised". Pannababuji quickly got up and hugged him and said "I have received the remuneration now". This was Pannababuji's way of saying that truth has value, not the money.

His second daughter, Noopur, lived barely for 2 years. In 1951-52 she died of small-pox. That day I was carrying Glaxo's 'Ostermilk tin' (which I used to get from my brother-in-law) as usual for the child. When I reached Malad, he was sitting in the *verandah* where there used to be a jasmine creeper. He embraced me and started crying, "Karnad, how can I play now...!" I was then told that Noopur was no more. She used to pluck *Taanpuri* and also used to reproduce a few notes if he played. Pannababuji used to say that Durgadevi has taken birth in his house in the form of that child. He was devastated by the loss. Pannababuji was also facing a financial crunch. So we decided to organize a programme to help him out. Mr. Shriram Joshi (Ladiwale Joshi), Mr. Tribhuvan Gondkar (who used to play flute in the film industry), Mr. Sunil Biswas (Pannababuji's brother in law) and myself sat together to arrange this programme in Kitte Bhandari hall, Shivaji Park, Bombay. I think those days Morarjee Desai was the chief minister of Maharashtra and had started imposing entertainment tax on proceeds of sale of tickets of cultural programmes. To avoid that, we prepared some cards as donation passes and sold them to our friends. We collected a minimum Rs. 10 per card. I recall even Mrs. Asha Bhosle had paid Rs. 101. We collected nearly Rs. 2000 which we put in a small steel box, and purchased a pair of *Dhotee* and a piece of cloth for his *Kurta*. All of us went to Malad to present the purse to Pannababuji. We presented all these to him, had tea together and were about to leave. He made a gesture to me to stay back. After everyone left, he opened the box, took out the money and gave it to me. I asked him "What is this Gurujee? Why are you giving this to me?" He

said "No, take this, your sister is getting married in a month, you will need some money for the expenses". I said "Gurujee, this programme was organized just to support you, and not me". I politely refused it, but was deeply touched by this big hearted gesture. To think of extending a helping hand to me at such a time was really too kind and generous of him. Subsequently another younger sister of mine got married on 18th April, 1960. Our office peon brought a letter for me at the wedding venue. It turned out to be Pannababuji's blessings to my sister on her wedding and fortunately it arrived on the wedding day itself.

Top musicians those days used to demand around Rs. 1000 per concert exclusively for the main artist and accompanists' charges were extra. Pannababuji, however, charged only Rs. 300 out of which he would pay Rs. 100 to Nikhil Ghosh for *Tabla* accompaniment. The sole idea behind it was to raise the status of flute as a solo instrument and bring it at par with *Sitar*, *Sarod*, Violin and *Shehnai*. Today flute has attained that status and we have to remember that the main contribution for popularising it came from Pannababuji!

He didn't pay much attention to the money matters. The cine industry owed him more than a lakh of Rupees which he never bothered to recover. Only after 1949/50 when the Cine Musicians' Association was formed the payment situation improved.

He always helped everyone who came to him with some request, irrespective of cast and creed. His greatness in helping deserving people, at times out of the way, was simply incomparable. In spite of his own constrained financial condition those days, he had adopted a number of needy persons like Ram Lakhan (a young orphan boy from UP), Harudada (Parshwanath Lahiri) and Shanti Mama (a Bengali person).

A special mention needs to be made of an incidence when an entire family, comprising of helpless mother (Smt. Dhondubai Narayan Sawant) and her 4 children in the age group of 1-8 years (Hansa, Rangu, Bebee and Ramchandra Pawar), were ruthlessly thrown out of a home on the road and Pannababuji took them in. They worked in his home and Pannababuji and his wife supported all of them just like their own children, till they settled in their personal life. Rangu (Sushila after marriage) married Mr. Kisant Sawant and is settled at Dhamni, near Karad.

Bebee (Jyotsna after marriage) married Mr. Sharad Moholey and is spending a comfortable life at Andheri.

His affection towards me

He never ever scolded me in the 11-12 years of association with him. After attaining adulthood I had no experience of such love and affection. He must have sensed my reverence, love and affection towards him like a son. May be because of this, I felt like visiting Malad every day and at times I even felt that perhaps in my past birth I must have been his son. Whenever I went to Malad in rainy season I would be completely drenched. By the time I walked the distance from Malad Railway station to Pannababuji's place, my clothes they would dry. But when it rained heavily Pannababuji forced me to return immediately with a fear of catching cold, cough and fever.

During winter every year, there used to be an epidemic of small pox. The mile long road from Malad Station to his house had slums on both the sides. During the heavy epidemic one could hear Marathi *Bhajan* being sung for pleasing the Goddess, to the accompaniment of a percussion instrument '*Naal*' with a peculiar rhythm. A bunch of *Neem* leaves used to be tied at the entrance of a house having a patient. The haunting sound of the *Devi Bhajan* used to scare me but the strong desire of meeting Pannababuji would drive me through it.

Once I was suffering from Stomatitis (mouth ulcers), nearly for a year. I was unable to eat and drink even plain water, and blowing the flute was out of question. Despite this I used to go to Malad at least once or twice a week, just to see Pannababuji. One day he asked me straight as to why I was taking the trouble to visit him regularly when I could not play the flute. I replied that meeting him was the best medicine for me. Then Pannababuji told me that I should at least return home as early as possible and have good sleep. Then after a long time, the continuous dose of vitamin 'B' complex tonic with Folic acid "Chem-Hepar" given by Mr. Naresh Kumta gave me relief.

Pannababuji's spiritual nature

I would like to touch upon his spiritual nature. He would never hurt anybody, never criticize anybody, always spoke of good thoughts and appreciated good things in his fellow beings. At home, he used to spend at least a couple of hours both in the



At a concert in Bangalore where myself and Pt. Kaikini were felicitated.
Accompanying on flute is Vishvas Kulkarni



Performing in Alladiya Khan festival at Chembur, Mumbai.
Pt. Sadanand Naimpalli on Tabla and Harshwardhan Kaulgi on flute (April 2004).

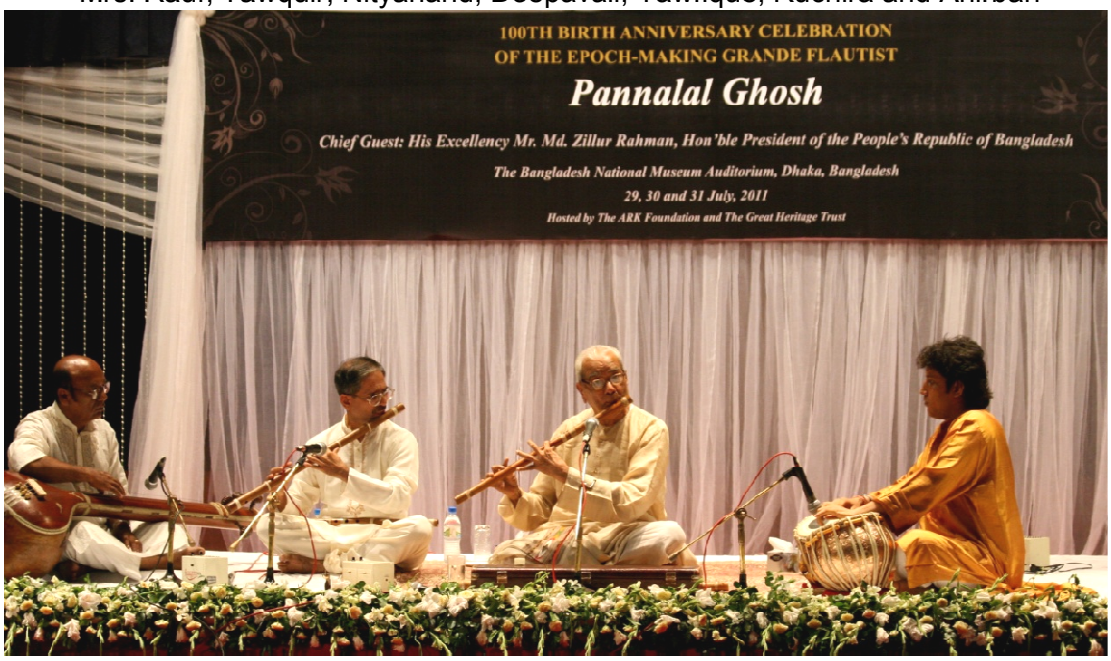


At Santacruz Suburban Music Circle, Mumbai, 3rd July, 2011
Left to right –Vaishali, Mukta, myself and Pt. Omkar Gulwadi on Tabla

My recitals in Pannababujee's
100th Birth Anniversary Celebration functions



The artists gathered at Mr. Tawfique and Dipu Moni's home, Dhaka :
Left to right – Dr. Dipu Moni, Tulika, Mr. Rauf, Dhrubo, myself, Vishvas, Mrs. Rauf, Tawquir, Nityanand, Deepavali, Tawfique, Ruchira and Anirban



At Bangladesh National Museum Auditorium, Dhaka on 31st July, 2011 :
Left to right – Mr. Leo on Taanpura, Vishvas on flute, myself and Mr. Swarup on Tabla



At Bedekar Ganapati Hall, Pune, on 24 July, 2011: Left to right –Vishvas, Vaishali, myself, Mukta (hidden behind me) and Pt. Nana Mule on Tabla



Myself and Dr. N. Rajam at her home on 26 January, 2011.



The Gaothan road, Somwari Bazar is named after Pannababujee



Left to right- Sanika, Varsha, Vishvas and
Rewati (standing) Kulkarni, myself and Dr. Anjali.



My family – Left to right, standing – Anand G. Bhatt (son-in-law), Shreesh K. Shirali (grand-son), Shruti A Bhatt (grand-daughter), Kishore D. Shirali (son-in-law); sitting – Mrs. Nagaratna A. Bhatt (daughter), V.G. (alias Narahari) Karnad (myself), Mrs. Meera V. Karnad (wife) and Mrs. Ameeta K. Shirali (daughter) (2009).



Myself and Meera (2009)

morning and evening for his *Pooja* and meditation. Perhaps because he was an ardent devotee of Ramakrishna mission and had taken *Deeksha* from Swami Birajananda (direct disciple of Swami Vivekananda), he had such a broad view of life. When in Bombay, he used to go at least once a month to the Ramakrishna Mission Aashram at Khar and offer his service by playing flute in front of the shrine. Many times I have accompanied him on either the *Taanpura*, *Surpeti* or on the flute during his visits. Whenever we went to Khar Math, Swamijee used to offer *Prasad*. Pannababuji used to be very careful that not a single particle of it or a drop of holy water ever fell down. When Swami Birjanand was seriously ill at Belur Math at Calcutta, Pannababuji rushed there along with Mataji to offer his services. He was the only person allowed to go to his room and play flute for him.

When he went for a concert in Madras, he went out of the way to play at Sri Ramakrishna Math, one of the oldest Ashrams at Mylapore. All the *Swamis* and other devotees in the Math were informed about the concert by Pannababuji. The shrine hall was fully packed and Pannababuji was very happy at the privilege bestowed upon him by Thakur Ramakrishna Paramahans. I was too young to understand his spiritual depth at that time.

The power of his music

As the legend goes the well known musician of Akbar Badshah, Miyan Tansen had brought the rains after singing *Megh Malhar*. But I have witnessed two instances of unexpected heavy showers while Pannababuji played *Miyan Malhar*.

In early 50s, a south Indian music critic Mr. Hari Haran, who used to write for Free Press Journal wanted to interview Pannababuji. It was a bright sunny day. After a long session of questions and answers he requested Pannababuji to play. Pannababuji selected *raag Miyan Malhar* to show him how the base flute is useful in playing the heavy ragas accompanied on *tabla* by Pt. Nikhil Ghosh. He started with a long *alap*. When he started the *Vilambit Khayal* to *Jhumra Taal* the black clouds started gathering and in a matter of 10-15 minutes we could witness bright lightening and loud thunders to our utter surprise in late April or early May. The thunder showers lasted for more than an hour. We had to take umbrellas from Pannababuji to reach the station. Mr. Hariharan vividly described this episode in his write-up and added that he had heard only of Taansen

bringing rains, but this *Miyan Malhar* was a real life experience for him.

The second experience of such thunder showers during a dry summer day was in Mangalore in the year 1955. Pannababuji was invited by a new music circle 'Sangeet Kalopasak Mandal', sponsored by Mr. Ratnakar Bhat Gulvady and brothers, and Mr. Bal Gopal of Balco Studio at Hampankatta. For that programme Pt. Nikhil Ghosh was not available and Pt. Taranath Rao agreed to come to Mangalore since it was his native place. Pannababuji and Pt. Taranathji travelled by train in Ist Class and Mr. Devendra Murdeshwar, Mr Suraj Narain Purohit, Meera and myself travelled by IInd class. We enjoyed the journey especially because Pt. Taranath Rao kept us entertained with jokes and his experiences of learning *Tabla*. Next day the programme was scheduled to begin at about 6.00 p.m. at Kanara High School at Mannagudde. As I had not completely recovered from the ulcers in the mouth I could not accompany Pannababuji on flute, so Devendra gave the flute accompaniment. Suraj Narain Purohit and I took the *Tanpura* and Pt. Taranath Rao sat for *Tabla* accompaniment. After a couple of evening *ragas* Pannababuji started playing '*Miyan Malhar*' on his base flute. The hall was fully packed and over a hundred admirers were listening to the music standing outside. As soon as he completed the *alaap* and started the *vilambit* composition it started raining with thunder showers and all those who were standing outside the hall started rushing inside. The whole audience was thrilled with the experience of un-seasonal rains to the tune of '*Miyan Malhar*'.

After the main programme at Kanara High School Hall a couple of merchants from Mangalore arranged two programmes in addition to the one played at Sri Ramakrishna Mission at Attavar, Mangalore. From there, Pannababuji was kind enough to grant my request to visit our house. So, the whole party proceeded to Mulki and spent a night at our old ancestral house. Taking this opportunity we also arranged a small programme at the residence of Mr. Bangley Seetharam Kamath and presented a small purse to him. Here again Taranath Rao gave a very fine *Tabla* accompaniment.

Next day Mr. Pangal Seetharam Nayak (now a very well known Orthopaedic Surgeon in Ranson, West Virginia), then a college student, took Pannababuji and others to his house at Katpadi,

about 8 miles to the North of Mulki. They stayed for about 4-5 days before returning to Bombay. *Meera* and I returned to Bombay to attend my elder brothers' wedding.

Once we went to Madras for a concert at *Rasik-Ranjani Sabha*, Mylapore. Mataji, Pannababuji and Nikhil Ghosh travelled in the 1st class. Mohandada and I went as accompanists in the 2nd class. We stayed with Hari Chhabria's father. We were given a hint that in South the appreciation of music would not be "wah-wah" but "chuk-chuk". The programme started. As per their tradition few senior A-class artists would be offered seats on stage on both sides. Well-known Carnatic flautist Swaminathan Pillai was also there. On the same day another rival Sabha arranged a programme of T.R. Mahalingam at another venue. In spite of it there was a big audience for Pannababuji's recital and the hall was full. As he started with *Sa*, on a big flute, the "chuk-chuk" appreciation came from the audience. Pannababuji turned to us and gave a soft smile. He played *Darbari* on their request, followed by one or two South Indian ragas. It was a great concert.

He got a raw deal

Until Pannababuji took over the assignment as the Conductor of National Orchestra in All India Radio, he did not get proper recognition that he deserved from AIR's Music Audition Board. Up to 1953/54 he did not get regular programmes from AIR and he was paid only Rs. 50 per day for 2-3 sittings, equivalent to a junior artist. Only when he was in Calcutta, at the bedside of Swami Birajananda, the Programme Executive for Music in AIR, Calcutta, got his file transferred from Bombay to Calcutta and the remuneration for his programmes on AIR was increased from Rs. 50 to Rs. 100.

In 1956 Mr B.V. Keskar, the Union Minister for Broadcasting, offered Pannababuji the post of Conductor of National Orchestra with effect from 1st October, for a period of 3 years, in place of Pt. Ravi Shankar. He composed quite a number of Orchestral Compositions during this period with the assistance of Mr. Y.V. Kamashastri, disciple of the well known *Veena* artist of South, Mr. Emani Shankar Shastri. Also he had the privilege of playing his flute solo in the presence of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Lord Mountbatten and other dignitaries of the world.

All said and done, Pannababuji was not as happy as he was in his 2nd floor apartment in Malad, where he used to teach his students and practise from 9.00 p.m. onwards. One day during our return journey from recording at HMV studio, he asked for my frank opinion about whether it was wise for him to renew the contract with AIR for another period of 3 years. Although we really missed him during the last three years I could not suggest him either way. The job at Delhi meant a regular monthly remuneration and a respectable position in the society. Also his daughter Shanti Sudha (*Monu didi*) and son-in-law Devendra Murdeshwar were in Delhi those days, since he was employed in the AIR. By his very nature he would never accept any monetary assistance from students or relatives/friends. And the chance to get frequent programmes at Bombay was meagre. He opted to continue living in Delhi eventually.

His last programme in Bombay

Pannababuji's music had a divine quality. His concerts never failed, due to any reason, audience or otherwise. In fact I feel after Lord Krishna it was only our Pannababuji who had a touch of divinity in his music.

In September 1959 on a Saturday there was a National Programme of Pannababuji's flute recital. The next day his flute solo concert was fixed at Podar College Hall, at about 5.00 p.m. This program was organised by a South Indian Music Circle called 'Bharatiya Art Music Society'. I received Pannababuji at Khodadad Circle in the morning of Sunday, he arrived by the Indian Airlines Coach after landing at Bombay from New Delhi by early morning flight. Since he was a heart patient, Mataji had instructed that he should be given complete rest on arrival in Bombay. So I came from my residence in Goregaon to Matunga where I stayed at my in-laws' place and on Sunday morning went to Khodadad Circle (Dadar) and received Pannababuji. We proceeded straight to his brother in-law, Sunil Biswas's place, at Girija Bhawan, Vincent Road, Dadar. After reaching him there, I requested both Sunil dada and his wife *Prabha didi*, to give him complete rest up to 3.00 p.m. when I was to pick him up. As Nikhilkaka (Ghosh) was not available, I had already arranged Pt. Shripad Nageshkar of All India Radio, for *Tabla* accompaniment. The organizers, as per our request, came and met Pannababuji at about 3.30 p.m. and took him to Podar College Hall at about 4.30 p.m. After tuning

the *Tanpura* the concert started exactly at 5.00 pm. Through a friend of mine, Mr. Vishwanadham of Philips Co., who was our neighbour at Goregaon, I arranged for the recording of the concert. *Mr. Vishwanadham* had come with his tape recorder. The concert was of a very high standard and was, as it turned out, my last flute accompaniment to him. I still remember that he started with *Kedar* and ended the program with *Bhatiyali*. I had played *Bhatiyali* for the first time that day and still play the same composition to date. That programme was one of his grand and memorable recitals. *Mataji* was to leave Delhi by train and arrive in Bombay by Frontier Mail the next day. Pannababuji had told me to receive her at Bombay Central in the evening. Pannababuji left all such personal responsibilities on my shoulders as if I was his son.

In the same trip he recorded his most popular L.P. record (*Yaman, Shree*) with HMV. I made the arrangements for his daily visits to HMV studio at Sir Phirozshah Mehta road. The timing of the recording was fixed after 6.00 p.m. to avoid the noise of traffic. Therefore it was decided that Pannababuji would come by train every day and take rest for about 2-3 hours at his niece's place. I had already requested my boss Mr. Tipton, the District Manager, to kindly allow me to leave office at 3.00 p.m. to be able to be with Pannababuji, as he was a heart patient and he kindly agreed. I would say he was definitely better than some Indians I worked with, as far as human relationships were concerned. Around 3 pm I used to sit near a window with a table on the 2nd floor of Royal Insurance Building, from where I could see the Jamshedji Tata Road easily. As soon as he would be visible, I would rush down and take the flute box and *Surpeti* from him and walk with him to Bank House, where his niece stayed. After reaching there he would to have some snacks with tea and then rest. At about 6.00 p.m. we would take a taxi and proceed to H.M.V. Studio, where Mr. G.N. Joshi of Indian Music Section, would be waiting for us.

During these recording days our return journey from Fort to Malad gave us ample time to catch up with our lives. I really treasure the time I spent with him those days! At one of these sentimental moments he pulled me close, held my hand tightly and asked 'Karnad, why are you so nice to me? You are so affectionate, loving, and obedient'. I politely replied, '*Gurudev*, the amount of love and affection you shower on me is thousand

times more than whatever little service I do for you. I do not know how I will ever repay all that you have done for me.' These may not have been my exact words because I was overcome with emotion and tears flooded my eyes as I was immensely touched by his gesture.

In that same trip both Pannababuji and Mataji, visited my place at Goregaon and brought gifts for my two young children. He had such warmth and kindness in him that we cherish these moments he spent with us forever. Pannababuji's trip to Bombay in September 1959 was my last meeting with him.

Pannababuji's celebrity associates

Because of his mastery on the instrument, the quality of his music and his humble and helpful nature, Pannababuji was regarded highly not only by the common music lovers but also by the senior stalwarts of music. This is evident from one unforgettable instance I witnessed. In one of the Sur Singar's music festivals, held in Kawasjee Jahangir hall, Pannababuji was to perform in the concert prior to Surashree Kesarbai Kerkar, who was elder to him and an artist of great fame. I had accompanied Pannababuji there. As usual Pannababuji insisted that the car should pick him up and bring to the venue at least 1 hour before the scheduled time. So we arrived and sat in the green room and started practising. Pannababuji never wasted any time in chatting or gossiping. Kesarbai suddenly walked in her typical royal manner and said "*Pannababuji, aap kaise mere pahele bajayenge*?" Pannababuji was surprised and said "*Mai kaise bata sakta hun, Brij Narayanjee ne* programme *banaya hai, aap unhise pata kijiye. Unke keheneke anusar mai pahele bajaunga phir aap gaengi*". She said "*Nahin, yeh nahi ho sakta. Kaun hai wahan*? *Jara Brij Narayanjee ko bulao*". When he came, she questioned directly "*Yeh kya hai? Pannababu ke baad main kaise ga paungi? Yeh nahi ho sakta. Pehele main gaungee aur mere baad Pannababu Bansuri bajayenge. Aur main samne baithkar unki bansuri sunoongee*." The organizers had to comply with her wish. That day Pannababuji played *Bihag*. This was a great honour bestowed on Pannababuji by a senior artist of high acclaim for *Gharandaj Gayakee*. And what a performance he gave, it is forever etched in my memory.

Many artists from films like Asha Bhonsle, Ashok Kumar, Kishor Kumar and Bimal Roy were his friends. Hrishikesh

Mukherjee, who used to assist Bimal Roy, wished to learn flute from Pannababuji. He was very thin those days. He started learning basics of flute from Pannababuji but after just a few days, he came and said "Babuji, I find it very difficult, I get tired while blowing". Later he used to come, sit while taking support of a show case and listen to Pannababuji play for a while, and then used to fall asleep in the same pose. While playing Pannababuji would take one look at him and smile.

Those days Anil Biswas stayed at Dadar and used to visit him frequently. He used to compose music for films and would seek Pannababuji's opinion. Although Pannababuji used to make several critical suggestions, he would never insist on incorporating them. I have accompanied Pannababuji for a few recordings for "Aandolan" film. The film was a flop but the direction was by Phani Majumdar and music was given by Babuji. His younger brother, Sunil Ghosh had also arrived from Calcutta to assist him. Sudha Malhotra's song was being rehearsed and certain trials were also taken with Asha Bhonsle. Pannababuji was very sporting and used to say "There is nobody like Lata Mangeshkar, she was an '*Ekpathi*', you give her a line once and that's enough. She will sing that line with 2-3 types of modulations and you select one of them". In the song "*Main Piya Teree* ..." actually Pannababuji was not told to play any specific piece in the background. Lata Mangeshkar said that Pannababuji played ex-tempore and those pieces turned out so beautiful.

Other artists, regularly visiting Pannababuji were, Smt. Asha Bhosle, Pt. Nikhil Banerjee, Mr. Sudhanshu Bhattacharjee (disciple of Pt. Ravishankar and Ustad Ali Akbar Khan). Music Director Arun Kumar Mukherjee was also a periodic visitor. Many well known Music Directors like Mr S.D. Burman, Mr. Ravi, Mr. Madan Mohan, Mr. Tripathi, Mr. Roshan etc. would demand for Pannababuji's flute pieces in their music. The film directors Bimal Roy and Phani Muzumdar were Pannababuji's close friends. Even Lata Mangeshkar used to request the well known music directors to get Pannababuji for good background music or flute pieces. So I used to have a good experience of seeing and meeting many renowned personalities connected with film music.

His other interests

I used to spend Sundays and holidays at Pannababuji's place (Malad). After about a year or so, Pannababuji told Mataji that I will be having lunch with them. Pannababuji practiced till about 1.30 to 2.00p.m. He gave me a mat and a pillow and asked me to rest for some time. I lied down on the mat in the hall where we used to do our *Riyaz*. I had a good sleep. At about 3-30 or 4-00 p.m., Pannababuji woke me up for lunch after his bath and pooja. I was taken to the kitchen. Pannababuji, myself, Harudada, Shantimama and Monudidi sat in a row and *Mataji* sat opposite us to serve the food. Pannababuji had his first course of Rotis dipped in cream in a fairly big bowl of bell metal. After he finished that, Mataji served us with Rice, *Baingan*, *Chutney* and curry. The curry was made out of some green leaves mixed with small sweet water fish. Though I was a strict vegetarian, I had to comply with Pannababuji's wish. As is the custom with Bengalis, the food was prepared in mustard oil. It was hard for me to gulp all that down due to the strong odour initially. After that day whenever I spent Sundays and holidays at Pannababuji's place, I had to take my lunch with them.

After lunch, Pannababuji and myself, used to rest on a mat till the evening. As per the Bengali tradition, just before lighting the lamps in the evening, they used to blow the conch and give *dhoop* of *Lobhan*. One day Mataji mischievously told me to wake Pannababuji, who was fast asleep. I got up and shook Pannababuji requesting him to get up. I tried my best at least for 5 minutes with no effect on him. His snoring only got louder. Mataji kept smiling from a distance and said that I was useless because I failed to even stir him. Then she quietly called Monudidi from inside and asked her to wake him. He was lying on one side and to my shock Monudidi simply walked over his hefty body. When she walked from the feet to the shoulder, Pannababuji gave a mere sigh, and got up after another 3-4 minutes. Mataji and Monudidi both kept giggling through this ordeal. That day I became aware of his other passions, eating and sleeping!

Pannababuji used to describe the days he spent in Calcutta when he stayed with all his friends as bachelors including Mintooda, Choudhary Babu and Fakirchand Samanta. Once a month, they used to have a party in which Khichdi was prepared with contribution from all. It was decided that the person who

ate the largest portion was exempted from contributing. On all such occasions, Choudhary Babu enjoyed a free meal.

Another surprising side I learnt about Pannababuji was that he had applied for a license to own a revolver. At the police station he was asked to give a test, so he fired 2-3 shots. The inspector was amazed at the accuracy with which he fired them. Pannababuji's art of perfection transcended even to revolver shooting.

Pannababuji missed a chance to visit Russia in a cultural delegation

The Government of India was to send a cultural delegation to Russia in 1949/1950. Being a top grade pioneer flautist of India Pannababuji was invited. Those days a musician getting an invitation for a foreign tour from the government was a rare opportunity. This trip was entirely sponsored by the Government of India, but there was no provision for any remuneration except for the expenses incurred, including winter clothes during that period. In any case there was no monetary loss involved. Unfortunately Mataji strongly resisted the idea of going without any financial gains and Pannababuji had to miss this golden opportunity. This invitation was then extended to Mr. Vijay Raghav Rao from AIR, Delhi, who gladly availed the opportunity.

Pannababuji did not join the AIR artists Union

After Independence, the casual artists formed an association to voice their protest against the music audition board headed by Pt. S.N. Ratanjankar (Principal, Moris college of Music, Lucknow). Pannababuji was not in favour of the agitation and hence refused to be a part of it. On the contrary, some senior musicians, who were actually keen to launch the agitation, quietly accepted a 'carrot' in the form of posts like "Music Producer" in different radio stations. This killed the enthusiasm of the rest of the musicians. Pannababuji firmly believed that a performing artist should prove his fitness before the Audition Board and only then become eligible for broadcasting their music. He did not hesitate to take a stand opposing the agitation, while others showed nepotism.

His students

The first batch of Pannababuji's students viz; Haripada Choudhary (Chaudharibabu), Aminur Rehman (Mintooda),

Fakirchanda Samanta, Sudhanshu Choudhury and Mukul Roy were from Calcutta where Pannababuji taught them after coming from Barisal. All these young bachelors shared a room in Calcutta. Later, Gour Goswami also received some lessons from Pannababuji in Calcutta. Chaudharibabu was the first to migrate to Bombay around 1938. He found that there were good opportunities for flautists in Bombay's film industry. Thereafter he insisted and brought Pannababuji to Bombay in 1940.

The second batch of his students consisted late Mr. Tribhuvan Gondkar, Mr. Rasbihari Desai, Late Mr. Devendra Murdeshwar, myself, Dr. Chandrakant Joshi, late Mr. Prabhakar Nachane, late Mr. Niranjan Haldipur, late Mr. Krishnarao D. Desai, Mr. Ramaprasad Mukherjee, late Mr. Mahesh Mastfakir, Mr. Sharad Moholay, Mr. Bhailal Barot, Mr. Suraj Narain Purohit and Mr. Hari Chabria.

I see that many more people claim to have learnt from Pannababuji as his students; however, I am quite sure that there were no other students than those listed above, who got an opportunity to receive systematic and long term lessons from Pannababuji.

Rasbihari Desai started from 1947 and Devendra Murdeshwar from 1948 and myself from February 1949. I remember Mahesh Mastfakir who used to come with a big flute and always requested Pannababuji to play *Darbari Kanada*. Prabhakar Nachne, Krishnarao Desai and Hari Chabria also pursued flute sincerely. Apart from these, Sharad Moholey, Suraj Narain Purohit (Jodhpur) and Bhailal Barot (Ahmedabad) used to come and stay with Pannababuji periodically. I have heard Bhailal Barot playing on AIR Gujrat station where he was employed as well. Mr. Tribhuvan Gondkar, Mr. Ram Joshi (Ladiwale Joshi) and admirers Mr. Surendranath (Bhai) Kambli were the regular visitors to Pannababuji. Mr. Bomkesh was also his student at Delhi as I learnt from Matajee, and this was confirmed when I personally met him in Delhi.

I feel like making a special mention about Mintooda because Pannababuji always spoke very high about Mintooda, whom he also considered as his best student. I also learnt from Mintooda during my visit to Bangladesh, that although Pannababuji was a Hindu, he had a very high respect for other religions. As a

proof, Mintooda further added that Pannababuji used to insist that he should follow their religious practices of *Roza* and *Namaz* during *Ramzan*.

Mr. Mohan D. Nadkarni (SBI), a strict follower of Pannababuji, in fact was a disciple of Pt. Haripada Chowdhury. He was a regular visitor to Pannababuji. Mohan Dada used to express his gratitude towards Pannababuji and used to say that he was alive only because of the parental care and medical treatment given to him by Pannababuji for over 1 month, when he suffered from typhoid. He was a bachelor and lived alone.

His wife, Mrs. Parul Ghosh

Pannababuji was a man of few words and even when in a talking mood, used to stick to topics of music. He never spoke about his personal life. But I was friendly with Mataji's younger brother Sunil Biswas and also knew Anil Biswas. It was only in 1986 when I visited Dhaka, that Mintooda narrated Mataji's story to me. Her maiden name was Parul Biswas and theirs was a love marriage. They told me that her mother was a famous artist of her time, her speciality being *bhajan* and folk songs of Bengal. I had a chance to get blessing from her when I visited Sunil Biswas, her youngest son, when she was staying with him. Mataji had received very good training in music from her.

Pannababuji's last journey

On 20th April, I received a message that I should go to the office for some urgent information (some statistics to be furnished to the head office). I had to go to the office instead of resting. Nobody was there in the office and the doorkeeper of the office told me "There was a phone call for you; I told them that you are on leave, but you can call again after 9.30". After 9.30, I received a phone from Harudada, who shared the sad news about Pannababuji's demise. I was too shocked to believe the news and asked him for the details only afterwards. He said that Pannababuji was having his breakfast that morning, when he suddenly had a massive heart attack. Anil Biswas was with him and although they called for the doctor immediately, by the time he came it was too late. They could not revive him. I was busy with some urgent office work, so I requested Mohandada Nadkarni to pass on the message to all of his students.

All of us wanted to go for the last rites. Chaudharybabu, Nikhilbabu and I met at the airport. Those days the only airline available was Air India, a Constellation plane which could accommodate hardly 20 passengers. They had a single seat available on the flight and so it was agreed that Nikhilbabu should go. Unfortunately by the time he reached, the cremation was done. I reached Delhi the next day. When I explained the urgency of my visit to Delhi to my boss, an Englishman, he understood. He was aware of the depth of my relationship with Gurujee and readily granted me the permission. I could not get a second class ticket in the Frontier Mail that day. Fortunately, Mr. Mukherjee, the station superintendent at Bombay Central, a *Sarodia* himself, knew that I was the student of Pannababuji, and immediately arranged for a first class ticket for me. I met Matajee, spent an hour with her, shared her sorrow and stayed for a day. Since I was on short leave, I returned the next day after taking permission from Matajee. I went back there for the 12-13th day '*Shraaddh Vidhi*' ceremony along with all the Gurubandhus like Rashbihari Desai, Sharad Moholey, Prabhakar Nachane, and Mohandada.

Mr. Brij Narayan, in his write up in the Editorial correctly called him a "*Yuga Purush*". I do not think anyone has contributed as much to the flute music single handedly. Because I have seen the mastery and the proficiency he had attained in all aspects of the classical music forms. I have heard him play *Dhrupad-Dhamar* on the flute, classical music - *Vilambit, Madhya Laya, Drut, Ati Drut* including staccato, light music like *Thumri, Tappa, Dadra, Kajri, Bhatiyali, Baul* songs etc. I don't think he has left any aspect of Hindusthani music untouched. He has played Carnataki ragas like *Malayamarutam, Hansdhwani, Abhogi,* and *Kanakangi* in front of a South Indian audience and received their admiration. He could enthral them for hours due to his mastery, not only over the instrument, but also over the Carnatik Ragas.

Pannababuji's calibre as a human being, his way of thinking, treasure of knowledge, his large heartedness is beyond words! Today I am making an effort because I happened to be under his wings for 11-12 years. His soul was such that a few minutes of his company, used to give me great peace of mind. Even today, not a single day passes without my remembering him. I strongly believe that his spirit has helped me, even after his demise, in making whatever I am today..

✦✦✦



Pannababuji and Mataji visited us at Matunga (1954).



Pannababuji after recording 1st HMV disc - photo by R. Kumtakar of Indian Express (1948).



Babuji performing at Suburban Music Circle, Santacruz (1952), myself accompanying on flute and Pt. Nikhil Ghosh on the tabla.



A photograph taken in a studio at Mangalore (1955). I am on Babuji's right side, Devendra Murdeshwar and Surajnarain Purohit on his left.



Pannababuji performing in Swami Haridas Sangeet Sammelan of Sur Singar Samsad, Bombay (1957).



Pannababuji with students at his home in Malad



Babuji's family portrait with daughters Monudidi and Nupur (1952)



Uday Manjeshwar, Meera's younger brother, receiving Babuji's autograph in train (1956)



Babuji with Geeta Dutt during their interview being broadcasted at AIR (Photo by R. Kumtakar)



Vijaykishore Dubey interviewing Pannababuji at AIR studio – photo R. Kumtakar



Send Off to Delhi (L-R) Sharad Mohale, K. D. Desai, An Admiser, Rasbihari Desai, V. G. Karnad, Gurudev, Harudada, Mataji, Giriprasad Mukharji, Ramprasad Mukharji, Niranjan Haldipur.



Nikhil Ghosh with his wife Usha (nee Naimpalli)



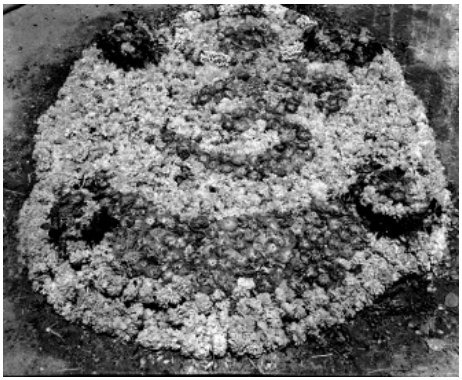
Babuji is being interviewed at home by AIR-Bombay personnel



Just before leaving for Delhi Babuji's students and well wishers presented them with gifts at Malad (27-9-1956)



Babuji's living room with his musical instruments given prime place



At Panchkuian Ghat, New Delhi after collecting Babujee's *Asthee* (2-5-1960)



The flowers I arranged at the place where Babuji was cre cremated.



The Gaothan road, Somwari Bazar is named after Pannababujee



9.
That everlasting flower

Because life is that everlasting flower
So treat our flower correct, and we may just see tomorrow
-Everett Smith

Somewhere during 1951, I had an invitation to play flute in Podar College of Commerce, before the college students! First thing I had to do was to rush to Pannababuji to take his permission and suggestions, because this was my first performance as a flautist. As expected, he not only blessed me with his permission, but also suggested that I should play raag Yaman, as taught by him, without any stage fright. Accordingly, on that day I played raag Yaman for about 20 minutes. After that, on the request from the teaching staff in the front row, I was to start a second item, but before that all the students stood up and started hooting loudly. At this point, the principal Mr. L.N. Wellingkar got up from his seat and sternly instructed the students to behave themselves because I was their invited guest. His strict warning worked like a magic stick. I then played a lilting *Thumari* which was duly appreciated by all with applause.

In mid 50s, while staying at King's Circle after my marriage, I became fairly popular among the music lovers. I was recognised as an upcoming flautist being trained under Pannababuji and many musicians from Dadar-Matunga area knew me quite well.

My first break in a big event was Swami Haridas Sangeet Sammelan in 1958. Ustaad Vilayat Khan had conveyed that he would be late by about half an hour. So I was contacted over phone at office and requested to give a small recital to fill up the gap. I agreed but had to arrange for getting my instruments and formal clothing for the recital. I somehow managed it through a student. I then proceeded to Pt. Taranath's home at Tardeo and requested him for Tabla accompaniment. After a short rehearsal, we proceeded to Rang Bhavan and started the recital at 6 p.m. Even though Rang Bhavan had *desi baithak* for the audience (people had to sit on plain ground), it was packed. The audience was eagerly awaiting the artist and Smt. Lata Mangeshkar had occupied the first row.

I played Pooriya Kalyan for twenty minutes, followed by a Khamaj Thumri and a light Dhun. On completion of the recital, we returned to the green room where Mr. Mohan Rao, a music critic from Indian Express, was waiting for discussion. He praised my performance and asked about my teacher's name etc. He also requested for my photograph which I did not have. He told me to give it to him the next day which was Saturday. I realized that I did not have an individual photograph of mine. I trimmed my photo from the joint photo with my wife and handed it over to him. To my surprise, the front page of the Sunday edition of 'Indian Express' carried the write up on me under the title "Young flautist gave a scintillating performance", along with my photograph. Being featured along with the stalwarts viz; Ustaad Vilayat Khan (Sitar) and Pt. Ram Narayan (Sarangi) with a conspicuous coverage was really encouraging for a young and upcoming artist like me.

Following this, I was invited to perform by Sur Singar Samsad, the State Music Festival, Gandharva Mahavidyalaya festival and on many such occasions, because Pannababuji had already migrated to Delhi in 1956, and there was no other reputed flautist in Bombay.

In one of the annual music festivals organized by Ganakala Vidya Nilayam (Goregaon), I was booked for one day exclusively for Hindustani music (flute) and Pandit Shashi Bellare, disciple of Pandit Taranath Rao, accompanied me on Tabla. The artists for South Indian music were Pandit Semmangudi Shriniwas Iyer (vocal), Pt. Madurai Mani Iyer (vocal), Pt. M. D. Ramanathan

(vocal) and Pt. Sheikh Saheb (clarionet). The flute recital was very well received and got good reviews in the newspaper.

These recitals gave me the recognition as a performing flautist of Pannalal Ghosh tradition; and thereafter I performed on many occasions in India and abroad. I give the entire credit for all this to the blessings from Pannababuji. Even today whenever I play, I feel that Pannababuji's spirit makes my fingers play on the flute.

One day, the famous child prodigy, Master Manohar Barve, who was running his music school in Khodadad Circle, requested me to join the India Culture League which was conducting annual music competitions. I was asked to be a judge for the instrumental music category. I worked there for three-four years till we shifted to Goregaon.

I also had an opportunity to participate in a music festival held in Goregaon when we resided there from February 1957 to May 1964. Here, I made friends with quite a few South Indian residents. Our immediate neighbours were Smt. Durgabai Shirodkar and Smt. Suman Bhosale (mother of Mr. Sudesh Bhosale), both were recognised radio artists.

In 1971, ITC Ltd. decided to introduce the ITC Sangeet Sammelan at Delhi. Coincidently at that time I was in Delhi on leave with my family. We stayed with my wife's uncle Pt. B.N. Dutta at Karolbagh. When I casually made a phone call to our Delhi Branch, Mr. A.N. Mishra who was posted there as District Manager, encashed this opportunity and requested me to see him at the earliest. He gave me the news about ITC Sangeet Sammelan, which would be inaugurated by the Chairman Mr. A.N. Haksar. Many top artists of India were to perform in the three days festival. Mr. Mishra did not know any of these artists personally; also he was at a loss to make arrangements for the accompanying artists and their instruments. He requested me to help him in arranging the music festival because I knew many artists personally. Since my posting was at Ahmedabad, he also spoke to Mr. R.K. Atal, the District Manager of Western District to extend my stay in Delhi.

The first task for me was to check the venue, Vigyan Bhavan. I was frustrated to see that the venue was a seminar hall with desks, and was not suitable for a music conference. The sound

and loud speaker arrangements were inadequate with only three microphone connections. The sound system for the hall was provided by Philips India Ltd., and Mr. Sambhajirao Chavan, a good friend of mine, was in charge of the maintenance unit. With his help we managed to procure high quality microphones, and as a result the quality of the sound system was improved, satisfying the needs of a classical music concert.

Then good quality instruments like Tanpura, Tabla, and Harmonium had to be procured for the accompanying artists. Mr. Dutta offered to help and contacted his good friend Pt. Vinaychand Maudgalya of Gandharva Mahavidyalaya, New Delhi who readily agreed to help. I went to his residence/school of music at Connaught Circus immediately. He took care of many things like getting various instruments along with some accompanists. Therefore the basic arrangements could be made without much trouble.

The days of the *Sammelan* were nearing and other arrangements such as decoration, distribution of invitations, getting volunteers etc. had to be undertaken and minutely supervised. I had the charge of receiving and attending to the needs of the artistes. The Sammelan was a big success and got good reviews from the press. The presentation of such good music, by top artists, arranged in a short span was highly appreciated and the audience was very happy with all the arrangements. After the success of this programme I.T.C. Ltd. decided to host these Sammelans every year. Thus I was given the responsibility of organizing the Sammelan in Delhi till 1976.

After Pannababuji's demise, we decided to meet Matajee regularly at Malad and play flute for continuance of the musical atmosphere which used to prevail there. Up to December, 1964 I used to go there every Thursday and Friday, to teach flute. It started with about 5-6 students and gradually increased to 10-15 students.

During our stay at Goregaon 2-3 students used to come to learn flute. Mr. Chandrakant Bhosekar used to be very regular and also quite promising. He used to come all the way from Sion and practise very sincerely. In January 1965, I was promoted to the managerial cadre. I had to avail the accumulated leave during the service as a clerk before 31st March and then assume duty at

the head office at Calcutta. I decided to visit my native place at Mulki, then Anandashram, Ramnagar and some other holy places. Therefore my flute classes got discontinued along with the contacts with my students and Mr. Bhosekar in particular. In fact, my association with the entire music circle of Bombay got cut off.

On my return to Bombay, on transfer in May 1976, from my posting at Delhi, I could start my flute music activities. I rejoined my friends, Mr Haripad Chowdhary and Mr Rasbihari Desai in teaching flute, in the classes being conducted at the Kanara house, Matunga.

We were allotted Tuesdays and Fridays and the attendance used to be good. I used to be very regular. My schedule used to be reaching Matunga straight after office, then visit my younger sister Chandrakala, have a cup of coffee and then go to class on the ground floor. I could reach my home at Boriwali only after 10:30 pm. This whole experience was highly enjoyable for me. Mr. T.M.M. Rao, a disciple of Ustad Khadim Hussein Khan of Agra *gharana* took a lot of interest in our music classes and it was due to his influence that our classes could run well in that area. We continued our honorary service to this activity. Some of these students could make appreciable progress; others who were employed could not devote adequate time for practising. Mr. Nityanand Haldipur, Mr. Ravindra Samant, Mr. Vijay Kabinittal and Mr. Harshawardhan Kaulgi were some of the students who put in good effort and cleared the audition test of AIR and became broadcasting artists.

I was lucky to be selected as a flautist in the dance troop visiting Germany in July, 1960. Father George Proksch, a Sanskrit scholar learning music from Pt. K.G. Ginde, had written the hymns on biblical themes for the dances to be presented in the World Eucharistic Congress held in Munich. The Indian contingent was to participate for the first time in this Congress. The music for the dance drama was set to Hindustani classical music by Pt. K. G. Ginde. The bamboo flute was chosen to be the main instrument accompanying the hymns sung by Pt. Ginde, since it is the oldest musical instrument. The rigorous practice sessions began from May and were held for 3-4 hour per day, at Nirmala Niketan till we left for Germany. Mr. Tipton was very cooperative in adjusting my work time and encouraged me to participate in this event.

We reached Vienna, after short halts at Cairo, Rome and Zurich. During transit some of the instruments got carried over to London. Immediately on arrival at Vienna, a performance was scheduled for video recording. The recording was somehow managed by substituting the rhythm instruments by kitchen utensils like degchi, ladle etc! We visited the monastery where a piece of wood from the cross on which Jesus was crucified, was preserved. We also visited the houses where Bethoven had stayed, as well as the palace where Mozart had given his first concert at the age of six. We proceeded to Munich for our scheduled programme. The experience of performing in chill open ground in traditional Indian clothes was memorable.

After the Munich programme, the troop had a chance to attend the 'Passion Play' at Oberamargao which was 100 km away. This was a major event that was held there once in 10 years. The village had an epidemic of plague long ago and people had prayed to the God for sparing them from the tragedy. They promised to perform a play depicting the life of Jesus every 10th year and the 7 hr play would be staged during the entire year. Thanks to Cardinal Gracious we could get passes for this play and enjoy the wonderful experience.

We also went to Italy and met the Pope in private audience at Castle Gondolfo, his summer resort. We could witness the Olympic Games held in Rome on television. After visiting St. Peter's cathedral, tomb, colosseum we returned to Munich via San Gotardo pass. This was followed by small concerts in the villages of Baveria. We got to experience the village life in Germany because every day our stay was hosted by villagers since there were no hotels or guest houses. We used to be selected by 'draw' per host. Our communication with the hosts was through gestures since neither of us would know the other's language. It was very funny at times. Their food was very bland and we used to miss our chillies and masalas. Once, while window shopping we saw a jar of chillies soaked in vinegar. We happily purchased it and used to ration it among three of us and take with us for dinner and quietly eat it.

Once we were invited to dinner by a Baron of Gumppenberg at his castle. There, we had a lavish spread of all varieties of food, drink and desert. After dinner the Baron shared some of

his experiences from his visit to India. He said, he was under the impression that all Indians were very poor, and was surprised to see many rich people who could afford a luxurious life style. I tempted quote one of his childhood memories he shared with us.

Though he belonged to a rich and royal family, during his school days he was kept in a hostel near Munich and had to manage everything on his own. Whenever he came home during vacations, he had to travel by public transport and after arriving at the base of their castle, he had to carry his luggage himself to the castle. All the servants had standing instructions to not to help him in carrying the luggage and anybody violating this rule was likely to lose the job. Sum and substance of it was that his son should be able to carry his own luggage and learn not to depend on servants to perform small jobs which he could do himself.

Although we were invited to stay back for the famous October Fest of Munich, I had to return to India because I had promised Mr. Brij Narayan to participate in the Shraddhanjali program of Pannababuji to be held at Indian Merchant's Chamber Hall, Churchgate.

I was invited for a concert tour of America (March to July, 1982), by Dr. Sitaram Nayak, who hailed from a village close to mine. Omkar Gulwadi was to accompany me on the Tabla. We had friends in England who suggested that we should break our journey to USA and stay in England for a few performances. Dr. Nayak granted his permission, so we landed in England and stayed in Luton with Mr. Paithankar, a student of mine. He arranged two concerts, one at Luton and the other at Bedford. After this, Mr. Surendra Kamath, another student, invited me to London for a couple of concerts at Edgeware and Central London.

We proceeded to USA and landed in New York. Our first programme was at Philadelphia, at Mr. Bantwal's house. The next day I had a programme at Broadway at 11 a.m. After the programme I went to stay with our host of the tour, Mr. Nayak at Ranson, West Virginia. It was a fruitful stay, since I could give about 40 recitals at places like Annarbor, Chicago, Cincinatti, Connecticut, Dallas, Denton, Detroit, Houston, Jackson, Los Angeles, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, Minnesota, Oakland, Pittsburg,

San Diego, Seattle, Washington, etc. I returned from USA after about 3½ months.

I would like to make a special mention about a few artists from Bangladesh, who took flute playing very seriously drawing inspiration from Pannababuji. Tawfique Nawaz, son of Mr. Aminur Rehman (Mintooda), is currently practicing international law and was a close associate of Dr. Kamal Hussein, a former Minister of Foreign Affairs, in the ministry of Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rehman. He had learnt flute from his father. Although he had heard about me, he had no information about my whereabouts and had no clue as to how to contact me. In the year 1985, while on a visit to Bombay, he took serious efforts to search and reach me at Borivali. The first thing he noticed after entering our home was a big photograph of Pannababuji occupying a prominent place in the living room. Then he requested that I play for him. I must have played for just about 10 minutes when he spontaneously got up and gave me a big hug. He was really happy to hear the flute being played in the maestro's style. Ever since he calls me 'Kaka Bhai' and treats me like his own family member.

I had confided in Tawfique my strong desire to meet his father, Mintooda (Mr. Aminur Rehman). He promised me to send his father to Bombay at least for a fortnight. Accordingly in the month of April 1986, Mr. Mintooda arrived at Bombay to stay for 15 days. Since he was a non-vegetarian preferring fish, I could not host his stay. Mr. Haripad Chowdhary readily agreed to accommodate him at his place at Malad. I used to meet him every day and we had extensive discussions on several matters. We organized a get together of Pannababuji's well wishers including all his students and grand students at Pannababuji's residence. He was felicitated in the room where Pannababuji used to practice for hours together. We took him around the Bombay city before his return to Dhaka.

Later in the same year a grand program was organized by Tawfique Nawaz at Dhaka on 75th birthday of Pannababuji (31st July, 1986), for which he sent 10 PTAs inviting myself and Meera, Devendra Murdeshwar along with his children Anand and Jaya, Haripad Chowdhary and his wife, Nityanand Haldipur, K. L. Ginde and Harudada. Unfortunately only Devendra Murdeshwar and I managed to respond to the invitation. We reached Dhaka and participated in the grand program which was arranged at the

residence of Mintooda. I started the program followed by Mrs. Niloufar Yasmin. After an interval for light refreshment, Devendra Murdeshwar gave the concluding recital. After the program I fulfilled my desire to visit Pannababuji's place of birth. Tawfique took us in a taxi to Barisal. Next morning we went to the small river Kirtantola, from where Pannababuji got his first flute. At this place, during his younger days, Pannababuji used to play flute to please his friends. Then we went to the place where their old house was situated. Unfortunately the old house was already replaced by a big housing complex of the local housing board. I touched my forehead to the ground (the place of birth) to pay my respect. We just visited a typical old Bengali house to get an idea about Pannababuji's home those days. That night I played my flute just to pay homage to Pannababuji. The next day we returned to Dhaka.

During the second trip (September-October 1987), I first visited Dhaka, spent a couple of days with Mintooda and then proceeded to Chittagong. I stayed there for a month for training Mr. Azizul Islam. I returned to Dhaka and stayed with Mintooda where we prepared a few flutes for Mr. Abdul Bari Siddiqui, Mr. Tawfique Nawaz and also for me. Before returning to India I also performed at Rajashahi.

My third trip was in 1992 when Mintooda's son Mr. Tawfique Nawaz organized a music conference in Dhaka. This conference featured well-known dhrupad singers Dagar brothers, Shovana Narayan (Kathak) and me. I had an amazing experience there. One fine morning the senior Dagar (N. Zahiruddin Dagar) gave a demonstration of the correct tuning of the Tanpura. He tuned a Taanpura to *Shadja-Pancham* and kept it standing near the opposite wall, about 6-8 feet away. He then requested me to sit close to the Taanpura and started his Alaap in Raag Bhatiyar. And I was most amused to hear every single note he sang being reproduced from the Taanpura!

In this trip the Indian ambassador and his wife were kind enough to invite me and my wife for dinner, the day after my performance. The ambassador's wife was a pianist and wished to know the technique of playing the bamboo flute. We had very good discussion on music and I also demonstrated to them how the music might have originated from the bamboo flute. She, in turn, played a few complex compositions by Bach on the piano.

This year, 2011 is the birth centenary year of Pannababuji. It is being widely celebrated especially in India and Bangladesh. In Bombay the Suburban Music Circle arranged my program on 3rd July at Swami Vivekanand Hall, at Khar. In Pune a program was arranged on 24th July at Bedekar Ganpati Tempple Hall where after my flute recital the wellknown young artist Sow. Arti Anklikar Tikekar gave a scintillating performance.

Pannababuji's student clan from Bangladesh lead by Tawfique Nawaz arranged a grand music festival for three days in Dhaka, 29th July-31st July, 2011. I was fortunate to be one of the invitees and Dr. Vishwas agreed to accompany me, so I could make it. The program went off very well. The first day started with vocalist Ruchira Panda (Kolkata), followed by flutist Nityanand Haldipur (Mumbai). Second day the first artist was vocalist Tulika Ghosh followed by sarangi by Dhrubo Ghosh. On the final day a program of Base flute duet by Tawfique Nawaz and Tawquir Rashad Nawaz was held. The *finale* item was my flute recital accompanied by Vishwas Kulkarni. I was given the honour because I happened to be the seniormost performing student of Pannababuji. We were the guests of the foreign mimister, Dipu Moni, wife of Tawfique, and hence we received grand hospitality.

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During the tour to Germany, a visit to Baron Gunepenberg's castle near Munich



During the tour to Germany, a visit to Baron Gunepenberg's castle near Munich



In a concert playing small flute at Mary Mount Convent, Rome, on 5-9-1960.
Standing – Father Proksh, Pt. K.G. Ginde on Taanpura.



The whole troupe with Cardinal Gracias and Fr. George Proksh in
a private audience with Pope John - I, at Castle Gondolfo, Italy (6-9-1960).



Left to Right-Devendra Ghosh, Devendra Murdeshwar,
Tawfique Nawaz, a friend and myself, at Barisal, Bangladesh.



The Pukur (lake) near Babuji's home at Barisal where he used
to entertain his friends with flute in the evenings



10.
The greatest good

"The greatest good you can do for another is not just to share your riches but to reveal to him his own."
~ Benjamin Disraeli

My association with flute brought me in contact with a number of people most valuable of them are my disciples. Here is a brief note about them.

My students

I have a number of students in Bombay. Before opting for my transfer away from Bombay, I was fortunate to have had several bright flute students. Mr. Chandrakant Bhosekar, Mr. Naresh Kumta and Mr. Surendra Kamat (now in London) used to visit me at my Goregaon residence for taking flute lessons. I remember well that Mr. Bhosekar would use every available moment for practising flute. He never wasted time even while travelling in a train or a bus, but would practice under a cloth on a bamboo piece (dumb practice). This is indeed an example of a sincere and serious student.

On my return to Bombay from upcountry postings for 12 years, I resumed taking classes in Pannalal Ghosh Memorial School for Flute at Canara House, Matunga road. Mr. Vijay

Kabinhittal, Mr. Harshwardhan Kaulagi, Mr. Ravindra Samant, Mr. Gajanan Bhandare, Mr. Umaria, Mr. J.N. Chauhan, Mr. Ramkrishna Rajurkar, Mr. Rajendra Surve, Mr. Chiwate and many other students came to learn there. I am happy to say that quite a few of them even today are sincerely pursuing flute playing and have earned good fame, despite their work and home responsibilities.

After we settled in Pune, in 1992, Mr. Vishvas Kulkarni approached me after listening to me in a recital. He was learning flute from Pt. Keshav L. Ginde, a senior student of Pt. Devendra Murdeshwar, and thus was well versed with playing the Ragadari and Gayaki on seven holed flute in the Pannalal Ghosh tradition. He was pursuing M.Sc. in Agriculture College at that time. He requested me to give him advanced lessons in the finer details of the Pannalal Ghosh style. After a year or so, he got a job at the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre, Bombay and migrated there. Being employed in Bombay it was difficult for him to have regular lessons from me and therefore, I visit him and stay with him for 2-3 weeks once or twice a year and we have a good time in activities connected with music.

During 2008-09, both Mr. Prashant Kulkarni and Ms. Vaishali Dixit approached me for lessons in flute music. They have had tuitions from various schools of music but they did not have any lessons on the technique of the instrument before starting the Raagdari. At present Vaishali, Niharika and Ashok Shevde are taking systematic lessons and have started practising seriously. These promising students have learnt the compositions in about 8 to 10 ragas already.

Few more sincere students I would like to mention are Sitaram Inguva, Devesh Bissa, Yogesh Phadke, Ashok Bhirange, Anay Kakde, Ashok Brahme, Shriram Gadre and Prashant Punde. As per Pannababuji's tradition I have told all the students that I do not charge any tuition fees but will teach them under the only condition that they should practise hard with sincerity and perseverance.

I must make a special mention of the students from abroad, because they took the pains of crossing the international boundaries and a distance of thousands of kilometers, to take lessons from me.

An American student, Mr. Douglas Jackson, was trained under me while I was posted at Ahmedabad. He came with an American tourist group and during a music programme at Mrs. Satya Ghai's residence we were introduced by Dr. M.R. Gautam, a Hindustani vocalist. During the discussion Dr. Gautam introduced me to Mr. Jackson as a senior disciple of Pt. Pannalal Ghosh, the ace flautist of India and told him that I could teach flute if he desired. Mr. Jackson was so excited with this opportunity that he cancelled his further tour with the group; and sincerely took lessons from me for a couple of months. Since I did not charge him any tution fees, as a token of affection and appreciation, he sent me a nice metronome all the way from USA.

During my concert tour to USA in 1982, I visited California to meet an old friend Pt. Taranath Rao. There I was introduced to Mr. David Philipson who was learning flute from Pt. Amiya Dasgupta, a Sitarist at Calart School of Music at Velancia. Pt. Dasgupta had learnt sitar from the maestro Pt. Ravishankar. David took every opportunity to attend my concerts at Hollywood, Bakersfield etc. to accompany me on the Tanpura. His main intension was to closely observe my fingering technique of playing the long flute with 7 holes at ease. One day when we were returning from Bakersfield we had a break on the way for lunch at Pt. Taranath Rao's place. Mrs. Taranath Rao was keen to treat us with her specially prepared fish and chicken dishes. Before lunch David gently took me aside and enquired if I could spare some time to give him lessons, since he was keen to learn the technique, especially to take advantage of the 7th hole. Upon my acceptance he mentioned his desire to come to India to learn flute from me. Later, he told me that this was as per the advice of Pt. Ravishankar to him. He did not succeed in getting a Fulbright scholarship in 1983, despite my letter of acceptance as a guide. He tried again, got the same in 1984 and came to Bombay. I got him a room next to my house and started his classes. After 6 months he had to shift to another accommodation at Bandra, because my neighbours objected to his late night practice. Though his initial scholarship period was for 9 months, he could get an extension for 6 more months. His scholarship during these 15 months was substantial. He followed my advice and saved enough so he could manage an extended stay. He could get a further extension for 6 months on my

recommendation. That's how he completed a training of 21 months under my guidance.

During my first trip to Bangladesh in 1986, when I stayed at Mintooda's place, one day a group of well wishers came to meet us and appreciated our recitals. I only recognized Mr. Akhtar Sadmani, a well known vocalist of Dhaka. Among them, Mr. Azizul Islam of Chitagong was also present. After my return from Dhaka, in December 1986 or January 1987, I received a letter from Mr. Azizul Islam, a Master Mariner. He mentioned that he had heard my recorded recital of Raga Shree, in their music circle, at Dhaka, and was quite impressed and hence was keen to learn flute from me. If I agreed he would stay in a hotel in Bombay for 8-10 days to take his lessons. I didn't take much interest since I did not know anything about him. He planned for such a short span that I thought may be he had no idea about learning Hindustani Classical music on flute.

Again somewhere in April/May 1987, I received another letter from him requesting me to agree to teach him. This time my wife told me that I should at least send a reply, so that he would be happy. So I wrote to him that I would be busy in my concert tour to UK during the period. As soon as he received my letter, he telephoned me, addressing me as Guruji, and said that he would start immediately from Dhaka to meet me. He also requested that a hotel be booked for his week's stay during which he would take his lessons. After about 15 days he arrived and gave me a ring at 6 am from Bombay airport. He had actually arrived at midnight but did not want to disturb me. He came to my residence and we had our breakfast together. I told him that hotel accommodation was not booked because they may not allow him to practice flute at the hotel. Therefore I suggested that he could stay at my daughter's vacant flat at Borivali near BEST depot. He agreed and stayed there for 10 days. Since it was only 1 km away from our place, he could come to us for the flute lessons and meals. Before leaving he offered to sponsor my visit to Chitagong and stay with him for a month so that he could have some more lessons at leisure. In Sept 1987, I visited him and stayed at his residence where he had made special arrangements to make me comfortable. Before leaving Dhaka I went to Rajshahi for a concert there which was arranged by Mintooda and Tawfique Bhai through their friends. After a month I returned to Bombay.

Later Mr. Abdul Bari Siddiqui from Dhaka contacted me expressing his desire to learn from me and I happily agreed. He was a performing flautist of Bangladesh Doordarshan and was already conversant in classical music. He came and stayed with me at Pune. He was very sincere and hard working putting in 12 hours of practice daily. This inspired me to teach him for at least 7-8 hours per day. He could not extend his visa and had to return to Dhaka.

My association with other musicians

A Jugalbandi programme between Pt. Shridhar Parsekar and Pt. Ravishankar was arranged at Kitte Bhandari hall, Shivaji Park, sometimes in 1948. The place was close to my residence and I decided to take this opportunity to know how a violinist would play with a Sitarist and rushed to the venue. This was the first time I heard Pt. Parsekar playing violin. The performance was a grand success. I observed that Pt. Parsekar was too good at producing the notes matching the Sitar, and Pt. Ravishankar was equally competent in reproducing violin patterns. This generated an interest in me to meet him to know more about his technique and music. Subsequently I started meeting him frequently and had keen discussions as both of us shared the same mothertongue. By sheer luck I got an opportunity to have a look at his antique violin preserved well by Mrs. Pendharkar in Anushaktinagar, Bombay, after a gap of about 60 years. This made me cherish the golden memories of our meetings. Mrs. Pendharkar is now settled in Nagpur.

I know Smt. N. Rajam since the time she used to accompany her Guruji Pt. Omkarnath Thakur on the violin. Her style was exactly the same as her Guruji's singing style. She had invited me for her Guruji's *Barsi* held in Varanasi in 1976. I had the privilege of giving the inaugural flute recital as against the conventional *Shehnai.*

While in Bombay, I used to meet frequently with Pt. D.K. Datar and once I had invited him to give his violin recital in a programme arranged by the Pannalal Ghosh Memorial Committee. His bowing technique is very pleasing to the ears as against many Hindustani violinists.

Pt. Kumar Gandharva

I was very friendly with Pt. Kumar Gandharva and used to converse in Kannada since both belonged to Karnataka. Once his programme was arranged by ITC Ltd. in Kanpur and I was specially requested to be there for encouraging the artist. I went to see him at Kashinath Bodas's house where he was staying. He insisted that I had lunch with him. During his programme, the Taanpura accompanist Mr. Bodas started shivering due to fever and was feeling uncomfortable in the AC hall. Panditji then politely requested me to take his place and I gladly complied. That program was unforgettable for me because I could share the stage with the maestro, and also because my brand new chappals were flicked from the wings!

During ITC Sangeet Sammelan in 1972/73 Pt. Kumar Gandharva was scheduled to perform and I took this opportunity to meet him. I inquired if I should send a car to fetch him the next day so he could attend the festival. He politely declined the offer since he was not performing that day but made it a point to come on his own. He followed such simple principles.

Shri. Vasant Achrekar had a standing instruction from Kumar Gandharva that he should intimate me whenever they happened to be in Delhi. One day I received a message from Mr. Achrekar for Kumar's programme at the residence of a Senior Officer in Delhi and both I and Meera went for it. The atmosphere there was so casual that Kumarji jovially remarked that the programme is going to be just like a *Riyaz* session! Except for the five invited artists, the rest of the invitees were only enjoying their food and drinks! I felt quite sorry for Kumarji since the organizers didn't realize his status and the concert was taken so lightly.

Kumarji had developed a crisp distinctive style of *taankari* incorporating the folk music of Indore-Malwa. The blending was so smooth in the fast taans that the rendition became flawless and very pleasing. His compositions of Nirguni bhajans have been made popular today because many young artists end their concerts by singing them.

Pannababuji also appreciated his music a lot. In fact he visited Kumarji at Devas and spent a couple of days at his place just a few days before he passed away.

Pt. Jitendra Abhisheki

I used to be associated with the Konkani section of AIR since my mother tongue was Konkani. Jitendra Abhishekiji used to work there and that is where I first met him. Later I came to know that he was learning vocal classical music from Ustad Azmat Hussai Khan of Agra gharana. We quickly became friends due to common interests and used to meet at various music concerts held in the city. I was not much inclined towards light music those days. Later when I heard his compositions in Marathi bhavgeet, devotional and natyasangeet I started appreciating it with serious interest.

Abhishekiji had visited me at Ahmedabad when he was on a scholarship for doing research on Gujrati folk music (*Bhavai*). Later, when I was posted in Delhi he came for participating in ITC Sangeet Sammelan. He happily accepted my invitation to join us for lunch at home where we had very good time in discussing about various aspects of music. I had visited his house in Pune couple of times but he was away, hence I could not meet him. The last time I saw him from a distance was at the Pune railway station, but we were standing on different platforms. He passed away just a few months after that.

Pt. Chidanand Nagarkar

Pt. Chidanand Nagarkar alias Chidumam for me, was a great admirer of Pannababuji and I became friendly with him when he was at the top post in Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan's music school at Chowpati, Bombay. His other interests included astrology, palmistry and face reading. Whenever Pannababuji was to be invited for a concert for Bhatkhande Anniversary, the group consisting of Chidumam, Nandumam (SCR Bhat) and Chotu (KG Ginde), used to visit Pannababuji at Malad and spend 4-5 hours discussing a variety of topics from music to astrology.

I used to enjoy his visits. He was a staunch devotee of Sri Satyasaibaba of Puttaparty and had attained certain spiritual power. Once we had gathered at Bailur Shantaram Rao's house, who was a common friend, at Matunga. It was a few months after my daughter Kshama's demise and he was consoling me. In an emotional moment he went into a trance and opened his palm with a jerk and lo behold there was vibhuti in it! He passed it on to me and I saw this supernatural event repeating once

more in that sitting. His younger brother tried to calm him since it was a highly energy draining experience.

Pt. S.C.R. Bhat

I met Pt. S.C.R. Bhat in December 1948 in the camp where Param Pujya Swami Anandashram was staying during his visit to Bombay. That night after the Pooja he offered his *Sangeet seva* in *Ashtavadhan*, following which I offered my *Venu Vadya seva*. He liked it very much and enquired about my name and details about my musical training. I told him frankly that Mr. Mohan Nadkarni, my neighbour, had given me 2-3 compositions in raga Yaman, Puriya and Darbari Kanada which I was trying to play. Then he strongly suggested that I should approach Pt. Pannalal Ghosh for learning flute since he was the best known flautist in India that time and was also a very nice person. From that day we became very good friends.

Pt. S.C.R. Bhat and Pt. K.G. Ginde were close friends and always moved together. After I became friendly with Pt. Bhat who was called as Nandumam, I also became friendly with Pt. Ginde. During our visit to West Germany as a part of the Cultural Delegation we became very close friends. He was trained in music from Maris College of Music, Lucknow, and was a very scholarly person.

Pt. Dinkar Kaikini was also in the same group as Ginde, Bhat and Chidanand Nagarkar, who studied together in Maris College of Music, Lucknow. I came to know him in 1944-45 in Mangalore during his sojourn. Our common interest in music brought us close. After a programme in Bangalore, we were felicitated together by Canara Union. We continued to be good friends till he passed away recently.

I had an opportunity to meet Pt. Nikhil Banerjee several times when he used to visit Pannababuji. Both of us being more or less of same age, we became good friends very quickly and also because we belonged to the same musical lineage of Maihar School. During my stay in Calcutta, I could arrange his Sitar recital for the connoisseurs of Hindustani music at Vishakhapatnam. He liked me very much and thus happily agreed to perform without putting any terms and conditions for remuneration. He was accompanied on Tabla by Pt. Mahapurush Mishra. On account of my official responsibilities, I could not

attend this recital, however, later on heard that the concert was a grand success.

Shri. Dinkarrao Amembal was originally from Mangalore. He was known as D. Amel in AIR, where he was in charge of the Indian Music section. He was an excellent flautist playing a small straight metal flute and composed several popular orchestral compositions for AIR. Many of his signature tunes are still played on AIR. Since I used to go to AIR often, I knew him well. He came from a family of well-known musicians. They were four brothers who actually had an orchestra, in which he used to play his metal flute. Later in life he became a staunch devotee of Huzur Ashrafkhan of Gujrat. I had an opportunity to visit his residence in Opera House area where I also met Pt. Dinkarrao's spiritual devotees. Thereafter because of my spiritual interest I started visiting him for his blessings. Once I accompanied him to an *Urs* ceremony of one of the devotees of Huzur Saahib held at Bhalusana, in Gujarat, along with other devotees.

Pt. C.R. Vyas and I were colleagues in ITC Ltd. since 1948. He was senior to me by one year and used to handle duty as an outdoor clerk in the godown. We were quite friendly and I used to visit him in his room in Mugbhat Lane of Girgaon, and accompany him to his Guru's place at Gaiwadi. He used to learn vocal music from Pt. Rajarambua Paradkar. He joined Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan to get his degree of Bachelor of Music. Later on he started learning from Pt. Jagannathbua Purohit and composed a number of compositions in Hindustani classical music which have become quite popular today.

Later when he bought a house in Bhuta Niwas in Matunga, I used to frequent it because my in laws stayed in the same locality. I remember once he met with an accident while riding his scooter on office duty. Also once he suddenly lost his speech and had to undergo brain surgery in Jaslok hospital. I was quite worried and had requested a clerk from the company to report about the progress of the operation every half an hour from the hospital. He came out of it successfully and led a normal life, thereafter.

Pt. Bhimsen Joshi

I was a founder member of Maharashtra Kala Mandir, Goregaon, which used to hold music programs periodically. In 1959 I approached Pt. Bhimsen Joshi for giving a performance

in the programme at Goregaon. Later we used to meet frequently at HMV studios when the LP records of Pannababuji and Bhimsenji were being cut. This developed into a close friendship and conversing in Kannada helped. Thereafter we participated in a few music concerts. He once performed in the ITC Sangeet Sammelan in Delhi in which I was actively involved. Also when we formed the Pannalal Ghosh Memorial Committee again I approached him for a concert and he readily agreed. It was a morning concert and he sang the *Miya ki todi* followed by his favourite *Jogiya* (*Piya milan ki aas*). His rendition was so soulful that it is engraved in my memory.

Although I used to meet **Pt. Basavraj Rajguru** at various music concerts, we came close when I met him in a programme of Ustad Amir Khan in Chhabildas High School at Dadar. I casually requested him if he would perform in Ahmedabad where I was posted and he readily agreed. Those days classical music had not gained much popularity there. He sang his masterpiece in *Chhaya Nat* that evening and later announced that he would take the audience to Madras. Then he regaled them with a couple of Karnataki compositions and won their heart. We had promised only the transport and hospitality to him. If we could collect more money we had promised that we would send it to him after settling the expenses. And to our surprise the donor passes fetched us about Rs. 700.00 which we posted to him by money order at his address at Dharwad. On receiving it, he promptly wrote a beautiful letter mentioning that this was the first instance that he got remuneration after a gap of a fortnight after the concert.

Smt. Kishori Amonkar was an upcoming artist in the early 60s. We were looking for promising artists to be presented on the platform of the programmes conducted by the Pannalal Ghosh Memorial Committee. We approached her mother Smt. Moghubai Kurdikar at her residence at Forjet Hill. On our request Kishoritai readily agreed to give a performance without any remuneration. During my stay in Ahmedabad one day I came across an invitation to attend her music concert and both my wife and I went especially to meet her. She was tuning the instruments in the green room and was surprised to see us and exclaimed “Karnad saab how come you are here (in Konkani)? Please sit in the front row to give me good support”. Then I informed her about my transfer to

Ahemedabad. It was that same evening when a funny incident happened. An admirer of hers took me aside and asked "There used to be a flautist Karnad playing a long flute in Bombay. Is he related to you in any way?" I had gained good amount of weight during my stay in Ahmedabad so he got confused. When I told him I was that same person, he said "Please don't mind, but I thought that Karnad is no more!" My absence from the music field of Bombay had made people to forget me. Even after becoming famous Kishoritai still acknowledges me.

A programme of **Begum Akhtar** was arranged in the first ITC Sangeet Sammelan in 1971 in New Delhi. Prior to this she was invited by the District Manager to his residence for my flute recital. After the concert she told me that she was reminded of Pannababuji. And she asked the organizers why they don't give a chance to their own staff members who have reached the professional standard in music to perform in their festival.

It was in the late 50s that I attended the first programme of **Ustad Amir Khan.** It was at Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Chowpati, Bombay, in the Bhatkhande Music Festival. Though the festival was fully booked for the artists a special slot of 30 min was given to Ustad Amir Khan who had just come to Bombay. After thanking the organizers for accommodating him in the last minute he declared that he would present a *jhalak* of raag Darbari Kanada. And his style of rendition was so appealing that the audience got totally enthralled! It was quite different from the styles prevailing those days. Later I never missed any of his concerts in Bombay especially because my wife used to sing in a similar style. In fact, I approached him once with a request to teach my wife. He clearly said that he doesn't teach anybody, but people just come to him and sit with him on the taanpura and listen to him and learn. Once I performed at a programme in Calcutta, I chose to play *Nat Bhairav*, a morning raga. After the performance Ustad Amir Khan came to the stage along with Pt. Gyanprakash Ghosh and congratulated me for a good presentation of Nat bhairav keeping the *bhaav* of *Chhayanat* in *purvang* and *Bhairav* in uttarang. I replied with gratitude that I had learnt it from his concert at Tejpal auditorium in Gowalia Tank about six years back.

Amir Hussain Khan's disciple, Nikhil Ghosh, used to accompany Pannababuji on tabla regularly. Through him I had

heard a lot about Amir Hussain Khan. Those days he had a lot of students and for their *Ganda bandhan* program a music concert used to be held. I used to attend these programs and also click their photographs. Pannababuji used to invite him to stay with him at least 2-3 times a year and host him for couple of weeks during which they used to have extended practice sessions as well as discussions about various aspects of percussion. That is how I knew him.

Taranath Rao hailed from Mangalore. He had learnt to play tabla from Kapurmama, who came from Goa, during his younger days. He was looking after their family business of trading in snuff and had his shop on Sandhurst Road. He had close association with Tabla players from Bombay and started taking lessons from Ustad Shamshuddin Khan. Due to this his business suffered a lot and finally had to be closed down. He had to sell off his big flat and buy a small one, in which he used to teach dozens of young students. On his music trips to Mangalore I used to visit him and so knew him well before I came to Bombay. He actually helped me get my first flute for studying from Pannababuji. For my first program in Sur Singar Samsad's annual event, I was fortunate to get his accompaniment on tabla. Later, when I introduced Tarmam to Pannababuji they became very good friends, so much so, that for many a programs of Pannababuji, he gave tabla accompaniment including the one in Mangalore (1955). Much later he went to USA as In Charge of Percussion Department of Calarts Music School in California. During my visit to USA in 1982, a program was arranged at Fiesta Hall at Hollywood by his disciples to felicitate him, in which I played flute to his tabla accompaniment.

Being younger brother of Pannababuji, I knew **Nikhil Ghosh** or Nikhilkaka, as I used to call him, from close quarters. Moreover his wife, Usha, happened to be well known to me since she was my younger sister's neighbour in Santacruz. Most of Pannababuji's programmes in Bombay and outside were accompanied by Nikhil kaka. He was by nature a reserved person.

I had special respect for Pannababuji's relationship with **Ali Akbar Khan** since he was his Gurubandhu. I was an ardent fan of his style of sarod playing which invariably used to take the listeners to a trance. Once during my association with the Pannalal Ghosh Memorial Committee, I approached Ustadji for

a concert for fund raising at Bombay. The idea and inspiration behind fund raising came from Mr Vijaypat Singhania. He gave us two programs and both were successful because Ustadji had his grandson Ashish Khan to accompany him on the sarod for the first time in Bombay and Ustad Alla Rakha on the Tabla, the combination turned out to be scintillating.

Once, Mr. Manohar Chimote, the well known harmonium player, arranged a program at Virar. The artists were Pt. Lakshmanprasad Jaipurwale, Smt.Nirmala Arun, Mr Chimote and I. The program was held in a local school hall. There was no power supply in Virar those days. So the program was conducted without any mike, loudspeaker or electric lights. All the artists gave their best performance and this was also the occasion when I could get closer to Pt. Jaipurwale who was really a great artist and had a number of compositions to his credit. Later he induced me to come and play before a Swamiji in King Circle where every Sunday some music concerts were held. Both of us used to attend these programs regularly. Since I used to stay there with my in-laws those days, I had great opportunity of interacting with many good musicians.

Manohar Chimote was a disciple of Pt. Bhishmadev Vedi who used to stay in Goregaon. Mr. Chimote was a regular visitor for his harmonium classes. I used to visit to listen to their class. Thereafter I met him in many concerts where he accompanied the vocalists. He was also a renowned harmonium soloist. Later the harmonium became known as *Samvadini*. He did some improvisations of harmonium which made the instrument more popular.

Madhukar Pednekar was managing the Tansen Music Circle in Girgaon and he invited me for a recital. I remember having played *raag Shudh Basant* (Aadi Basant) that night on the terrace of his shop which was well appreciated by the audience because this *raag* had not gained popularity those days. He also showed me an electrical harmonium, perhaps the primitive version of modern synthesizer, on which he used to give solo performance. Mr. Pednekar was a very friendly artist and his performances were always liked by the connoisseurs. He was a class in himself.

I knew **Mr Arvind Parikh** for a long time since his father was associated with Anandashram at Ramnagar, North Kerala. Swami

Ramdas from this Ashram along with his disciple Mother Krishnabai used to visit Bombay and stay with Parekhji at Churchgate. I used to visit them along with my wife and offer our *seva* by playing flute and bhajans respectively. That is where I met him and came to know that he was a senior student of Ustad Vilayat Khan. Thereafter we got friendly and we had invited him for performing at a concert arranged by Pannalal Ghosh Memorial Committee.

Pt. Sharad Sathe is known to me for a long time. He was a disciple of D.V.Paluskar and Sharatchandra Arolkar. He used to participate in a programme of AIR called Sangeet Shiksha. Both, my wife and Pt. Sharad Sathe acted as students of Pt. Deodhar in that programme. He is a very well trained artist and I try to attend his concert at every given opportunity.

I know **Pt. Shankar Abhyankar** (Sitar virtuoso) for last 40-50 yrs. A wonderful music teacher, a brilliant composer, and also a witty and humorous orator, he is known to keep his audience captive during his lecture-cum-demonstrations. He is good at describing every great personality, in a nutshell. My stay in Pune since the past 20 years has brought us less face-to-face, but whenever I attend his performances, it brings back memories of how he was 50 years ago.

During my stay at King's Circle between 1954 and 1956, Pt. Chandrashekhar Naringrekar and I became friends since he was staying at Tejukiya Park. A sitar player of Dagar gharana, he was also a fine teacher. We came closer because Mrs. Naringrekar and my wife were classmates during their school days.

I always had ample opportunities of meeting Mr. Shivkumar Punjanijee being a resident of Malad. He is a very good flautist and plays in films and other light music and dance concerts. He was also on the staff of musicians at AIR, Bombay. Whenever there were any programmes in connection with Pannalal Ghosh memorial committee, he would positively attend as a respect to our Guruji.

After shifting to Pune I had the opportunity of meeting Shri. Datta Marulkar, a famous music critic. Since he lived closeby I used to visit him often and enjoyed the discussions on our common interest of music and musicians. Unfortunately he left us early just after completing his biographical work on Pt.

Shrinivas Khale.

Mr. Anant Patwardhan is a well known flautist from Dadar, Bombay and I have had many occasions to meet him during which, we always exchanged our sweet memories of the past.

Being an ardent devotee and a follower of Pannababuji, Pt. Harishchandra Kokare used to religiously observe Pannababuji's death anniversary with flautists' concerts on that day. Upon his affectionate invitation, I had a chance to perform one year. Commendably he conducted this activity at Sangli, for nearly 50 years, till his demise on 5th December, 2009. The local music lovers always attended this function with fondest love for Pt. Kokare.

Mr. Surendranath alias Bhai Kambli, another ardent devotee and follower of Pannababuji, is a very good friend of mine since the mid 1950s. Though he did not have any formal training under Pannababuji, he was a regular visitor to Malad and without fail he would attend every recital by Pannababuji.

I had interactions with all the above musicians as briefly mentioned above. I have also been a listener to a large number of wonderful artistes some promising and others stalwarts. viz; Ahmedjan Tirakhwa, Allarkha, Chembai Vaidyanath Bhagwatar, Dagar brothers, Gangubai Hangal, Kesarbai Kerkar, Madurai Mani Iyer, Malini Rajurkar, Mallikarjun Mansur, MD Ramanathan, Padma Talwalkar, Ravishankar, Veena Sahatrabuddhe and many more.

I consider myself most fortunate to have had the opportunities to absorb a lot from all these learned musicians.

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At Swami Haridas Sangeet Sammelan, Bombay on 24-9-1957.



In a concert at Bombay, Pt. Taranath Rao on Tabla and
Shri. Chandrakant Bhosekar on Tanpura.



Performing in a concert after my visit to Germany in September
1960, arranged by friends at Kitte Bhandari Hall, Dadar. Pt. Nikhil
Ghosh on Tabla. Prabhakar Nachne, Naresh Kumta behind.



At a concert in Bangalore in 1965 with
Gaurang Kodikal on Tabla and Hari Chhabria on flute



Inaugural recital at Pt. Omkarnath Thakur Memorial Foundation's 'Naad Vandana Music Festival' at Varanasi 12-2-1976. Tabla accompaniment by Pt. Kumarlal Saxena (son of Pt. Samta Prasad).



Mr. Douglas Jackson receiving a lesson from me, on the terrace of my home in Ahmedabad.



In a concert at Dhaka, Bangladesh during the first visit (1986).



A rare photo by
Shri. R.M. Kumtakar - Ustad Bismillah Khan
with his elder brother in a concert at Santacruz.



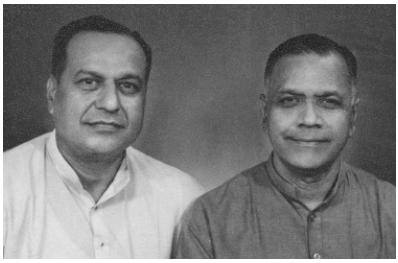
A portrait of Pt. Kumar
Gandharva taken by me.



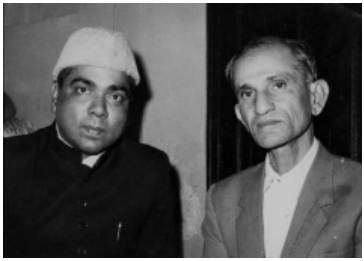
Pt. Jitendra Abhisheki, photographed by me



Mohan Nadkarni, the well
known music critic, who gave
me this photograph on our
first meeting in 1948.



Pt. K.G. Ginde and Pt. S.C.R. Bhat.



Myself with Pt. D. Amil at Ahmedabad in 1968.



Pt. Prabhu Tendulkar, photographed by me



Photographed in a studio at Pune (1993).



11.
Indian classical music, *Quo Vadis ?*

... it is at least reassuring to keep in mind that classical Indian music has survived and thrived for many centuries, during which time it has shown both resilience and readiness to develop. In fact, there is ample room for optimism that the growing global interest for this highly evolved art tradition will inspire serious students of Indian music all over the world to continue exploring the rich tradition of ragas and talas.

- Ken Zuckerman

In the times of Swami Haridas and Tansen there were no electronic sounds. All the reference was to the notes of the tanpura. The music those days was accompanied by *Sarangi* or *Rudra veena* which was very close to the tonal quality of voice. The early music was mainly in the praise of God and was in the Dhrupad/Dhamar style. After the Mughal invasion the music prevalent in the princely states got influenced by Persian music since the artists came from those parts. Those days the musicians were patronized by the state and therefore the Indian style of music got evolved into the present *khayal* style. Even the lyrics of the compositions got changed from *Hari* to *saki* and *maikhana*. Our folk music also got uplifted to thumri, dadra, kajri, tappa and gazals to keep the listeners' interest alive. Such a style became known as 'light' classical music.

In the period from 40s, 50s and 60s the concerts used to have great content and quality, unlike some of today's programs that mostly have a "show piece" character. Even during the annual programmes of birth anniversaries of Thakur Ramakrishna Swami, Mother Sharada Mayi Ma and Swami Vivekanand, Pannababuji used to perform and it was a feast of good Hindustani music by stalwarts available in Bombay. The atmosphere for Hindustani classical music in Bombay was very congenial. The artists were not that expensive and good admirers were always available.

Today, in the introduction of the artiste prior to the programme, they highlight the fact about "they have performed at several concerts, both within the country as well as abroad". But this can hardly be the criterion to judge the quality of an artist. Actually the potential of a performing musician can only be judged when he/she performs in front of a studious audience of learned people and other stalwarts, at places such as Bombay, Pune, Allahabad, Dharwaad etc and gets appreciation. In fact, more than the sheer number, I feel it is important to mention where the programmes were held and how it was received by the learned audience.

The present day instrumental music has completely changed. From being closer to *gayaki ang* the main emphasis has shifted to the rhythmic patterns and jugglery of notes thus showing the mastery over the techniques of playing the instrument rather than keeping the spirit and colour of the ragas and their compositions. A number of artists devote considerable time to the *drut* pattern having *sawal-jawab* theme with the tabla as if it was a wrestling event in an arena. This pattern was not prevalent about 60 years back. This has been adapted from Carnatik style of music where the main artist plays a particular pattern of rhythm which is already known to the percussionist and both the artists perform together in the beginning. Later they play individually piece by piece. As against Hindustani concert, Carnatik music needs a special mention because in their concert (*Kacheri*) every artist on the stage is given due chance to show his/her talent over their respective instrument, which is commendable. In a concert of Hindustani music, a vocalist gives chance either to the percussionists or to the harmonium/sarangi player to show their talent only when he needs to take a break.

In the teaching style today, although the student is taught the four stages of music s.a. *asthayee, antara, abhog* and *sanchari*, it is rarely possible for them to explain it to the layman. The exposition of the raga, even by the senior artists do not comply with this pattern thus distancing it from the real classical grammar. *Asthai* and *Antara* are known to everybody. However the structures of *Abhog and Sanchari* are comparatively less understood. *Abhog* according to me is – rendering the combinations of 2 notes, then 3 notes, then 4 notes etc, and then make phrases from all these. Later of course, all these are played in parallel with Laya-Tala. *Sanchari* means – Taankari from one octave to another, and in a flowery style.

Today more importance is given to the faster tempo, which only highlights the artistes' technical prowess thus pleasing the crowds and drawing applause, whereas the *alaap* and *vilambit lay* which portrays the real essence of the raga is given less importance. Many artists have either forgotten the main ragas such as *Kalyan that, Purvi that, Marwa that* or have lost the mastery over them and hence conveniently play the *mishra* or unknown ragas, so people cannot judge their portrayal to be correct or wrong. I feel even if they want to present such experiments they should give a thorough explanation to the listeners regarding the merger of the ragas so their portrayal could be well appreciated.

We also see that a select few musicians get into limelight, not because of their command over the art of Hindustani music, but because they play to the gallery and gain popularity. Jugglery and gymnastics with the percussionist is the height of their performance. The beat is appealing to masses and thus the quality of music gets compromised. Then the masses expect the same show every time they attend their concert and the artists comply. Somewhere in the process the rich tradition of classical music in India is getting side tracked. And that is my worry. Name and fame goes mainly to such artists who play an unknown *raga* (new ragas like *Hemavati*) in unknown *taal* (9 ½, 11 ¾ matras etc). Some artists indulge in experiments calling it 'fusion' (or confusion?), Jazz, others insist on *Sawal-jawab* or *Jugalbandi*, all these involving acrobatics of *Lay* and *Taal*. I feel the soul of the pure *Raagdari* gets sacrificed in this process. The melodious presentation of a *Raag* capturing the real mood, especially in

case of some of the *Sampoorna Raag,* has become rare or unheard. Some instrumentalists excuse themselves saying these *ragas* are not suitable to play on their instrument, I differ from this opinion.

The music masters of today should try to introduce or play compositions set to rhythms that are rarely heard e.g. *jhumra, tilwada, ada chawtal* etc. *Alap ang* that is heard today is not the real *alaap*. The artist announces that he/she will be playing *alaap*, but in reality he plays only in *jod ang* thus giving a wrong picture about the *alaap*. Unfortunately today listeners do not have a voice to criticize the artists on the spot, once they become famous.

I feel that at least a handful of artists should come forward with the common interest of preserving the musical tradition as depicted in the *Shastras*. They can hold seminars and workshops to bring forth the authentic raaga structure, with all the rare and pure *ragas*. Today, the trend is to look at music only as a source of entertainment.

If we wish to preserve our rich tradition of Hindustani music, which has already undergone a drastic change in a matter of couple of decades, it is essential that today's artists explain the grammar and *bhav* of raga before their recital so that the listener can understand and appreciate our music better.

While I sit down and write my story I think of all the people who have been responsible to bring me to this stage of life, with an immeasurable gratitude. I remember all the people who played the most important role of teaching, cultivating, and nurturing music in me. I consider the part of my life I spent with them as the golden period and will cherish it till the last breath.

Apart from these, I have been blessed by innumerable lives that have helped me silently, directly or indirectly. Many personalities I came across have showered their best wishes, love and affection. I sincerely salute them all and prostrate with my sincere gratitude. I may not be able to repay what I have received from all. What I can still do is to pray, from the bottom of my heart, to give them good health and long life.

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Appendices

A. Genesis of flute

One day, Pannababuji told me how the flute must have been born and according to that version I realized that the flute was born even before the Stone Age. Aborigines living in the jungle could hear the sound emanating from the big bamboo shrubs. A curious one tried to figure out the source of this sound. He realized that it was coming from a bamboo reed which was swinging with flowing wind, and was making the sound. Then he plucked that piece of bamboo and tried to swing it in different ways and at a particular angle while swinging it produced the sound. He shortened the bamboo by burning, started swinging it and could produce the sound. Later on he found that there was a hole, made by a wood borer, because of which the sound was produced. Then he cut the bamboo till the hole from one side towards the knot. After removing the joint by burning, he noticed that the note changed. Then he thought that instead of swinging the reed for flow of air, he should try to blow the air with his nose into the reed. When he did that a sound was produced. Then he tried to reduce the length of the bamboo from the other end. As the length of the bamboo got reduced, there was change in the pitch. Then he bore 3 holes and started closing some of them using his fingers while blowing through the nearest hole. This produced 4 notes, one by closing all the three holes, and second by opening one hole, third by opening 2 holes and fourth one by opening all the 3 holes. And by closing all the holes it used to give another note. This way he experimented on his bamboo and eventually he tried blowing it through his lips to produce the same sound. Later he learnt to manipulate the pressure of blowing to produce more notes. Earlier, he used to get *Sa* by closing all the holes, now with a little more pressure, it could give Pa. Then opening one hole could give *Re*, little more pressure could give *Dha*. By opening 2 holes, it would give *Ga*, and a little higher pressure would give *Ni*. Then opening all the 3 holes it would give *Ma*, and with little higher pressure gave upper *Sa*. Thus he experimented further and realized that while he was blowing through the lips the fingers of the other hand were free. Then he introduced 3 more holes and started playing with the other hand. This is how today's flute has 6 holes. With these 6 holes he could play 7 notes. Thus he started playing with 6 fingers, 3 fingers from the right hand and 3 from the left one using all the 6 holes to produce different notes.

I understand that today there are different trends in different parts of this country, may be half a dozen varieties of flutes are available. I am told, especially in the Bastar district of Madhya Pradesh, a flute is still played by swinging in the air. I have seen in my childhood how the cow herd boy played beautiful music on a small flute with 3 holes. Later Pannababuji had suggested that I make a flute with 3 holes on which I could produce not only the *Sa, Re, Ga* and *Ma* but also *Pa, Dha, Ni* and *Sa* with a little increased pressure. That means, *Sa* becomes *Pa, Re* becomes *Dha, Ga* becomes *Ni* and *shuddha madhyam* becomes *Sa*. So *Sa, Re, Ga, Ma* automatically become *Pa, Dha, Ni, Sa*. And

according to *Shashtras* we know the distribution of *Shruties*. It is said that between *Sa* to *Re* there are 4 *shruties*, between *Re* to *Ga* there are 3, between *Ga* to *Ma* there are 2, between *shuddha madhyam* to *Pancham* there are 4. Thus between *Pancham* to *Dhaivat* the number of *shruties* are same as those between *Sa* to *Re*; between *Dhaivat* to *Nishad* there are same numbers as between *Rishabh* to *Gandhar*; and between *Ni* to *Sa* they are same as *Ga* to *Ma*. So the distribution is 4, 3, 2 and again *Dha, Ni, Sa* is 4, 3, 2 i.e. 9+9=18 plus *Shuddha Madhyam* to *Pancham* is 4. That is why between *Shuddha Madhyam* and *Pancham* another note, *Teevra Madhyam* exists. So by changing the *Sa* from all the holes closed, to a *Sa* produced from 3 holes open and 3 holes closed the flute can be played. Now *Teevra Madhyam* is easily played by opening all the holes.

B. Guidelines for students to play flute of Pannalal Ghosh style

For the benefit of readers who desire to learn Pt. Pannalal Ghosh style of flute with seven holes, I wish to give a few guidelines. These guidelines are described for the right handed flautist. The left handed flautists should interchange the left and right sides respectively.

1. Posture :

The first thing Pannababuji taught me was about the importance of the posture while playing. At least two hours prior to sitting for practice/performance, there should be no intake of any solid food, except liquids like water, tea, coffee to keep stomach and lungs free from pressure. The posture should be either *Ardhapadmasan* or *Sukhasan*, keeping the spinal cord straight, on a thin mattress. By sitting straight, one can keep the lungs free for inflating to the maximum limit allowing extended blowing. The neck must be held straight, slightly turning to the left. One should wear simple attire (like *Kurta, Pajama* or *Dhotee*) to avoid any stiffness to legs and hands. Before starting to play the flute, pay worship to the instrument considering it as the “God of learning”.

2. Grip :

While playing, the flute should be slightly inclined towards the ground. Forefinger of the left hand is used to close the first hole from the mouth-piece, and the thumb automatically is placed little below the hole, as shown in the picture. Forefinger and thumbs of the right hand close the 4th hole in the similar way. Tips of middle- and ring- fingers of both hands are used to close respective holes. Although the bending of the wrist is avoidable, the wrist can be slightly rotated to facilitate placing of the little finger on the 7th hole. The right hand grip is generally stronger than the left hand to help placement of the mouth piece under the lower lip very firmly to avoid any change in exhaling angle. It should be remembered that both the forefingers are rarely used for any sliding movements. The readers are advised to refer to the illustrations for understanding the grip correctly.

3. Fingering :

The notes are produced by closing and opening of the holes, as is the case with any style of flute playing. However, in Pannalal Ghosh style, the flat notes are produced by upward-sliding the finger in *Aaroha* (ascending), and

vice versa. Cross fingering is strictly avoided for producing flat notes because it may not produce the desired *Shruti*, however, it can be used for producing the notes beyond *Taar Pancham*.

The *Teevra Madhyam* can be played in two ways, either by keeping all the holes open or by closing all the holes (the 7th hole with the little finger). *Teevra Madhyam* in *Aaroha* should be played by closing the 7th hole and in *Avaroha* it should be played by keeping all the holes open. This sequence should be reversed in the next round. Then the octave should be played in a slow tempo. One must be able to use the little finger with maximum ease, at will, by practicing it the most. The *Teevra Madhyam* should be primarily produced using the 7th hole if it is to be played in combination with *Pancham*. On the other hand, the *Teevra Madhyam* should be produced from the 1st hole if it has to be played in combination with *Gandhar*.

4. 'Blowing' versus 'Exhaling' :

Usually for playing the flute, the word 'blowing' is used. In fact the residue of the air inhaled is 'exhaled' while playing flute, not 'blown'. The exhaling is delicately controlled through a fine aperture created between lips. Hence I suggest that the word 'exhaling' be used in place of 'blowing'. Exhaling is also considered as a kind of *Pranayama* in which inhaling is short and exhaling is for longer time period.

***5. Ka-Ra-Ta-Pa* :**

In vocal music 'letters and words' are available for making the language. A Tabla player uses *Na*, *Tin*, *Dha*, *Dhin*, *Ge*, *Ke*, etc. as the basic letters. Similarly, the instruments such as Sitar and Sarod make the use of the strokes named *Daa-Dir-Daa-Raa* etc. to compose the phrases. The 'letters' in the case of vocal and instrumental music have been well defined and characterized. On the contrary, in the case of 'Indian bamboo flute music' a systematic attempt to define the 'basic letters' has not yet been made.

While analysing my training from Pannababuji, I have recently arrived at a conclusion that the flute playing involves 2 basic patterns "exhaling" (mentioned above) and "strokes". Exhaling leads to the production of an unbroken sound which I would call as an '*Omkaar*'. The strokes are used for producing 'accents or letters'. I have named these strokes as "*Ka-Ra-Ta-Pa*". '*Ka'* comes from the root of the tongue. '*Ra'* is produced by soft vibration of the tongue-tip. '*Ta'* is produced by touching the tongue-tip to the upper teeth. '*Pa'* is produced by soft burst of air from lips. Combinations of 'exhaling' and '*Ka-Ra-Ta-Pa* strokes' are used for creating *Aalaap*, *Gamak*, *Khatki*, *Murki* and staccato.

Another, rather philosophical meaning I have drawn from '*Ka-Ra-Ta-Pa'* is '*Karo Tapa'*, which means 'put in hard and sincere efforts'.

6. The '*Dhruva Madhyam*' :

Mr. Prabhakar Nachane named the *Teervra Madhyam* coming from 7th hole as '*Dhruva Madhyam*' because Pannababuji's name got permanently elated to a great height, just like the legendary *Bhakt Prahlad* was placed in the sky as '*Dhruva Taara*' or the North Pole Star. The '*Dhruva Madhyam* is the heart of Pannalal Ghosh tradition of flute playing.

It may appear surprising that this tiny 7th hole, which does not even produce

a new note, can be so important, and clearly demarcates all other flute traditions from the original style of Pannababuji. It is due to the 7th fingering hole or the *Dhruva Madhyam* that a *Meend* between *Teevra Madhyam* and *Pancham* can be played. This offers a wider range of notes and facilitates playing a *Raga* in a naturally flowing manner making it highly appreciable. To elucidate, the ornamentation of *Pancham* can be done effectively by brushing from *Dhruva Madhyam*, in the same way one would play or sing *Shadja* by slightly touching *Nishad*. The use of *Dhruva Madhyam* becomes critically important while playing the *Ragas* in which *Pancham* is omitted in *Aaroha*, like in *Todi, Yaman, Pooriya, Pooriya Dhanashree* etc. However, it should be kept in mind that the versatile use of this 7th hole in combination with other notes is of prime importance, while its individual usage is proportionately less important.

Some flautist of India (of course not belonging to Pannalal Ghosh tradition), have said that "*Ragas* such as *Kedar* and *Miyan Malhar* are not meant for flute!" In fact, *Miyan Malhar*, *Kedar* (and many other "heavy" *ragas* such as *Todee*, *Darabaree*, *Pooriya*, *Shree*, *Pooriya Dhanashree*, etc.) are the speciality of Pannalal Ghosh tradition. I can only say that anybody making such statements belong to "*Naach Na Jaane, Aangan Tedha*" category *(A poor dancer has the excuse of blaming it on the crooked stage)*!

7. Practising :

In the beginning, one should play the *Shadja*, for long enough to ensure tuning of the drone (*Taanpura*) and concentrate on it. The position of the mouth piece (on the chin below the lips) must not change thereafter.

8. Performance :

For any musician, the physical fitness is an important factor. I have witnessed the fall of many promising and stalwart artists which was primarily due to their carelessness about the health and addictions to vices, resulting in a tragic end of their career. A flautist cannot be an exception to this rule.

Particularly for a flautist, it is important that his/her teeth be in a good condition. Knowing this, Babjuje was always very watchful about the health of his teeth and even for a trivial tooth problem, immediately used to consult Dr. H.V. Rao, a well known dentist of those days. The artist should avoid any conversations with the persons around in order to remain pre-composed. In case it is really needed to talk to anybody, the artist should avoid any controversial subjects just to keep his/her mind totally focused on the ensuing recital.

It is desirable for an artist to take the stage with simple attire as mentioned above. A striking or gaudy colour combination should be avoided because otherwise the attention of the earnest connoisseurs in the audience may get diverted or distracted. This is evident from the elegant appearance of the stalwart musicians of both vocal and instrumental music, to quote, late Pt. Mallikarjun Mansur, Pt. Bhimsen Joshi, Pt. Kumar Gandharva, Pt. Jitendra Abhisheki, Pt. Pannalal Ghosh, Ustad Ali Akbar Khan and many more. In other words, the "colour of the music" presented by the artist should be more glaring than the clothing and gestures.

According to me the most important things, once on stage, are the

mannerism and ethics. The artists must follow the conventional practices of behaviour on the stage. The artists should acknowledge the presence of elders and senior musicians in the audience. Main artist should always be particular about paying due respect to all the accompanying artists. I consider the Carnatic music concerts as an ideal example for treating the accompanying artistes with respect.

The reader needs to keep in mind that the above mentioned thoughts are only the guidelines and sincere practice under the supervision of an experienced *Guru* is strongly recommended.

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Holding flute – from another angle



Pannababujee's style of holding flute



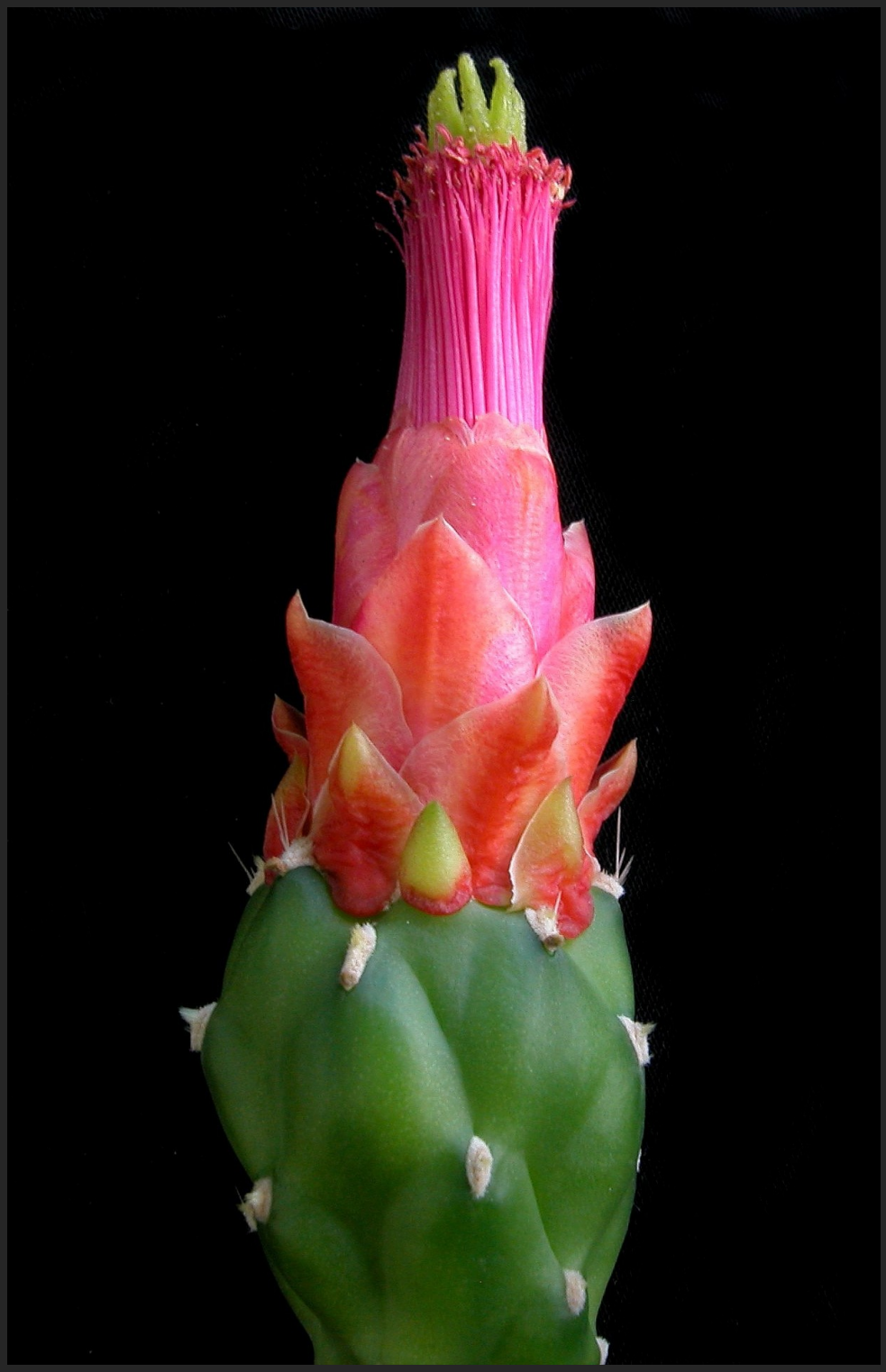
Holding a bass flute with 4 holes



Holding a bass flute with 4 holes



My photograph by Katti Studio, Dadar (1952).



Pt. V.G. Karnad is an outstanding flautist and disciple of Pt. Pannalal Ghosh. In this autobiography he narrates in succinct manner his experiences and journey towards mastery in flute playing.