

A Khandani Perspective: Room for a (Long) View

DANIEL M. NEUMAN

Abstract: A half century personal overview of my study of Hindustani musicians generally, and my teacher specifically provides the context and explanation for what I aver as the distinctive features of Hindustani music. First, the music practice did not require colonial reconfigurations from the perspective of its hereditary khandani practitioners. Second, for ethnomusicologists, the relationship between the researcher-disciple and consultant-master teacher was uniquely personal and loyal. Accordingly, despite exponentially expanding our understanding of its music practices in the last 50 years, ethnomusicological research in India remains remarkably free of generational friction, other than the necessary traction to learn more.

Résumé : La vue d'ensemble acquise au bout d'un demi-siècle d'étude des musiciens hindoustanis en général, et celle transmise par mon professeur en particulier, fournissent le contexte et l'explication de ce que j'affirme être les traits distinctifs de la musique hindoustani. Premièrement, du point de vue de ses praticiens khandani héréditaires, la pratique musicale n'a pas eu besoin de reconfigurations coloniales. Deuxièmement, pour les ethnomusicologues, la relation entre le disciple-chercheur et l'enseignant maître-consultant était uniquement personnelle et faite de loyauté. Par conséquent, bien que notre compréhension de ces pratiques musicales ait connu une croissance exponentielle au cours des cinquante dernières années, les frictions intergénérationnelles restent remarquablement absentes de la recherche ethnomusicologique en Inde, à l'exception de la nécessaire incitation à en apprendre davantage.

Reflexive Prologue

Fifty years ago, I was taking a course on the Indian decennial census with Bernard Cohn at the University of Chicago, during the Spring term of 1967.¹ This class led to my conducting research on musician castes, and from 1969, looking for continuities and discontinuities among different musical lineages in the then contemporary scene in India. I had already

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started working with Bruno Nettl on ethnomusicological inquiries. My own approach to research, a synthesis of the historical analysis of census data, ethnographic analysis of musicians' genealogies, and ethnomusicological analysis from deep musical apprenticeship, provides a useful baseline for my considerations of generational differences in approaches to the study of history and culture more broadly, and music and musicians in South Asia more specifically. Even in those days, Bernard Cohn was opening up issues that would become central to studies in the humanities and social sciences after Edward Said's publication of *Orientalism*, namely the impact of colonialism on formations of knowledge and cultural forms.²

In my own early research, I made an argument about the modern provenance of a then seemingly old traditional system, the *gharana*, and tied its emergence to the collapse of the Mughal empire post 1857, and the emerging technologies of train and telegraph (Neuman 1978). Notwithstanding the fact that I was historicizing a tradition in colonial conditions, I didn't view that construction as fundamentally colonial. This is in part because I associated any colonial influence with Westernization, and because I viewed the emergence of the *gharana* system not as a form of mimicry or adoption, but rather as one of many adaptive strategies deployed by hereditary musicians in the face of a rapidly changing world.

Additionally, the impact of colonialism on music was viewed as largely marginal at the time by scholars of both Hindustani music and musicians. I went so far as to write that the Indian musicians with whom I worked had little to say about British colonialism – at the time many had been young men and women before Independence – and as far as I could tell, the British had little interest in Hindustani music (other than a sexualized fascination with nautch dances). It is also useful to remember that in 1967, Indian Independence had been achieved only 20 years earlier.

Now it is 70 years since Independence, and this gives me room for a long view. Friendly readers as well as the editors recommended, on reading the earlier version of this paper, that I frame this article as a memoir rather than a critical essay. I agree and urge the reader to interpret this work as a critical memoir.

Hindustani Exceptionalism

In the last 15 years, much scholarship has shed light on how our understanding of classical traditions in South Asia is indeed shot through with a specifically British orientalist view of the past. We have also learned that the claim for

a space of culture left “untouched” by colonialism can itself be interpreted as a colonial construct, the separation of a public space (where adoption of colonial ways was a necessary means of modernization) from an inner space (where colonial influence was explicitly and deliberately kept at bay).³

My central argument in this essay, however, is that the exceptionalism of Hindustani music continues to persist because of the musical role of hereditary Muslim lineage musicians as the foundational knowledge bearers of this oral practice.⁴ In publications and talks, (initially in my first book, (Neuman 1980) I have pointed out that the British had little interest in the work of these hereditary lineage (known as *khandani*) musicians, while the latter had no interest in European music. Most importantly, *khandani* musicians did not look on European music as superior.

This is an important point. India was virtually alone (Indonesia perhaps being an exception) in having classical and other “art” musicians who did not look to the West for notation and theoretical systems⁵ as Egypt, Turkey, and Iran did, nor did they transform into a new class of Western art musicians, dominating indigenous forms, as was the case for China, Japan, and Korea. On the contrary, writing anything down was often discouraged, because memorizing was thought to be the superior form of knowledge acquisition, while writing or notating would invariably be a distortion. As such, I have continued to be interested in how *khandani* musicians and their traditional modes of teaching and learning have both adapted and contributed to the contemporary practices of Hindustani music.

This summary of my views is somewhat of a contrast to the postcolonial and postmodern emphases of ethnomusicological research since the 1990s. But first I want to examine the master-disciple system of imparting knowledge, which I believe takes not only a unique form in India, but also directly and profoundly affected the nature of ethnomusicological research in the earlier decades I recount here.

My Ustad

On February 27, 2011 my main teacher in India, the late Ustad Sabri Khan, conducted a *ganda bandhan* ceremony in which I became ritually “tied” to him as disciple to master. Why did this happen and why then? At the time he was 84 and I was 67 years old.

Actually, I had first undergone the *ganda bandhan* ceremony with him in 1970 after we had been working together for about a year. So why did we do it again? I had this idea, a kind of renewal of vows, which I thought he

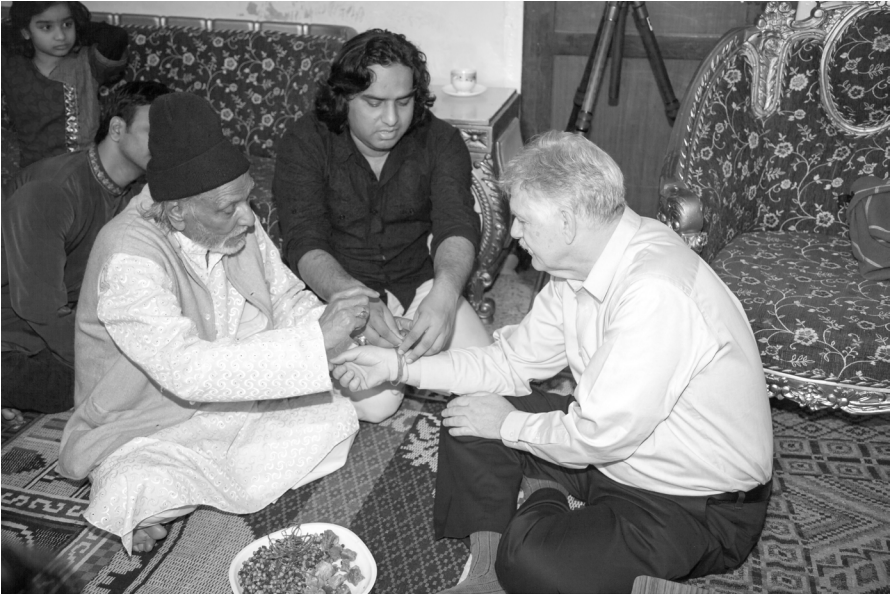


Fig. 1. Sabri Khan tying the thread of discipleship (assisted by his son) on Daniel Neuman in February 2011.



Fig. 2. Sabri Khan with his four daughters and the two youngest sons still living with him at the time in January 2011.

would appreciate after more than forty years of a very warm relationship. We photographed and videotaped the ceremony, which reaffirmed that special relationship, even though we had both become somewhat elderly and not been in continuous contact all these years.⁶

What was also important, to both him and me, was that during the ceremony, Sabri Khan had his sons, daughters, and grandchildren around him as well. The generations were well marked, as one of his daughters, who was just out of infancy when I first photographed her in 1969, is now the mother of a successful musician⁷ in his own right.

From my perspective, this ceremony was a reaffirmation of my connection and commitment to the entire family. It was also an acknowledgment, to me and perhaps to him, that Sabri Khan had been the single most important musician in the many years I had been conducting research in India. Nevertheless, although both ceremonies formally recognized what has been a long, close, and personal relationship, my subjective position as I moved back and forth between “outsider” and “insider” in those early years is worth reflecting on.

When I first met him in February of 1969, my own intention as an anthropologist was to take lessons on the *sarangi* with him, as a sort of gateway to the larger world of Indian musicians. At that time, hardly anyone in the West had even heard of the *sarangi* and being a former student of the violin, this seemed like a natural avenue to explore.⁸ The fact that the *sitar* and *sarod* already had a number of devotees also made the study of the *sarangi* attractive. And finally, I wanted to work with ordinary musicians, not star soloists, as this would give me a better handle, I thought, on the regular world of Indian musicians. As it turns out, these ordinary musicians, as many readers already know, were hereditary Muslim musicians, who inherited their knowledge and training in music through their lineages, which is why they are known as lineage, or in Hindustani, *khandani* musicians.

Studying with Sabri Khan did provide one important gateway, which was to the studios and canteens of All India Radio, located on Parliament Street not far from the nominal centre of Delhi at Connaught Place. Sabri Khan worked there daily, and I would go with him or meet him there, and follow the routines of studio work and canteen tea drinking and smoking *bidis*. Here I was able to meet many other staff artists, interview them, and arrange to visit them in their homes.⁹ My disciple status with Sabri Khan provided some legitimacy in what appeared to them as a deeply unusual, not to say suspicious interest in something – *sarangi* players specifically and staff musicians more generally – that no one otherwise paid attention to.¹⁰

As an anthropologist, I hadn't really studied Hindustani music formally before I went to India.¹¹ I had dutifully listened to recordings of

Ravi Shankar, Ali Akbar Khan, Bismillah Khan, and others, but I had no real understanding. Yet as an anthropologist studying the musicians, I did not feel that understanding the music *per se* was fundamental. I was “studying” musicians after all. But I was wrong ... very wrong.

In ways that I don't really understand even now, I had a musical epiphany one evening, about nine months after I had arrived. I was listening to a recording I had someone make for me, of Ram Narayan's National Program broadcast.¹² He began with *raga* Maru Behag, a raga I had already been studying with Sabri Khan, followed by raga Chandrakauans, and then finishing with a *Pilu Thumri*. I had actually been in the studio audience while Ram Narayan was being broadcast, but nothing special happened there.¹³ It was only after I had listened to the recording several times that something clicked – I think in the middle of the *Pilu* – that all of a sudden I came to understand the “language” of raga music and all of a sudden it “spoke” to me. It was a real epiphany that enabled me to understand not only the music but indeed all sorts of things about India that had been a puzzle and often a source of frustration before then. Just as I suddenly understood Hindustani music in its own language and terms, I quickly began to understand the larger tapestry of Indian culture in its own terms, and felt a personal and emotional connection that I had not felt before.

It was after this event that I began to take my discipleship with Sabri Khan seriously. In a way, this was a conversion experience, and although I continued to do fieldwork, collecting genealogies and conducting interviews, I now started to practice with real seriousness.

Entering into that world of sound, especially as seen from the perspective of a sarangi player, I also learned what enormous sacrifices were involved in developing the technical skills to being a sarangi player. Technically, it was actually easier to be a soloist than an accompanist, because as a soloist you controlled pace and tonality. But as an accompanist, having to musically mimic the vocalist meant that one had no control over the performance.

After practicing hard for many months, I was able to play three octaves of scales fast and in tune. Sometime during this period, Sabri Khan said I was ready to perform publicly and he had already signed me up for a music festival in Bihar. But I refused.

It was then I realized that no matter what fantasies I might have had about getting good enough to perform publicly, I would always be seen as a curiosity to be exhibited rather than a performer to be heard. I knew I was not nearly good enough to be musically interesting, and to get to that point of being really accomplished would take me many more years, if indeed that was a desirable outcome at all.

I think from Sabri Khan's perspective, this was both like an audition – he prepared many younger musicians over the subsequent years to become radio and television artists – and also an exhibition of someone from “Amrika” playing on the sarangi.

Sabri Khan of course accepted my refusal, although I think he was somewhat surprised. For me psychologically, this was a turning point, because whatever else I might have imagined or fantasized, I was not going to become a sarangi player.¹⁴ And after that experience, I actually didn't want to anymore, as I believed no matter how hard I worked and how accomplished I could become, my identity and the reception of me would always be as a foreigner and an oddity first. In a sense I had come full circle to where I began, an anthropologist studying the sarangi as way to study musicians.

In the early months of my discipleship, Sabri Khan used to come, often accompanied by the late Faiyaz Khan on the *tabla*, to give lessons in my rented home, first in Green Park extension (near Yusuf Sarai), and then from about June of 1969, to an apartment I had moved to in Greater Kailash. I kept asking him to allow me to visit him in his home so that he wouldn't have to make the long trip to Greater Kailash from his place in Old Delhi. But he was strangely reluctant.

Finally, sometime in the early autumn of 1969, after my gently requesting him on numerous occasions, he allowed me to visit him in his little flat in Mohalla Niariyan behind Ajmeri Gate. When I arrived, I could see why he was reluctant.

He actually lived just off of G.B. Road, then considered the main red-light district of Delhi. Walking from G.B. Road towards his apartment that first time, avoiding stepping into anything untoward in the garbage-strewn pathways, up a long flight of stairs, past a family of *zardozi* embroiderers,¹⁵ I could see that he lived with his family of five children and his mother, along with his younger brother, his wife, and their three children. All of these 13 individuals lived in two rooms with an open courtyard that served as the kitchen. Between the neighbourhood and the actual space, Sabri Kahn's reluctance made sense, especially as he had toured with Ravi Shankar in the United States just the year before. He knew how a foreigner might react because he lived in very straitened circumstances, and though the visitor might not be shocked, he would certainly be very surprised. It was something I was going to get used to as well. I was always welcomed at his home where most of the lessons took place, although Sabri Khan would still come out to Greater Kailash from time to time.¹⁶

From this period on we became quite close. He would bring me to

meet people who had been important to him. Indeed, that is how I met my future father-in-law, Mr. D.P. Sen. The only time he ever got angry with me was when we were playing *teenpati* – a form of three-card poker – and he felt I was playing stupidly and losing money too easily. He was right. My mental excuse was that I understood five- or seven- card poker, and had no experience with three card poker. But the telling point was that what appeared to him to be a lot of money was not for me.

The difference in our economic status was a fact of life that both of us took for granted. I lived in a space probably as large as his, but with only two residents. I had a car, albeit an old 1948 Austin, but a car nonetheless, at a time when only quite well-to-do individuals had automobiles.¹⁷ My estimate now is that my monthly income at the time was perhaps ten times his monthly income.¹⁸ At the time this was as natural as the assumption that Americans were rich and Indians poor.

Allow me to speculate on Sabri Khan's motivations for becoming my teacher and later formalizing this with the *ganda bandhan* ceremony. For most *ustads*,¹⁹ having a disciple from outside the family would be at minimum a sign of prestige. At a time when foreign tours were becoming more frequent, and being a "foreign-returned" artist was prestigious (Neuman 1980), having a foreign disciple became yet another source of prestige. This situation was somewhat paradoxical, because a foreigner was not typically regarded as a serious student. Ravi Shankar, for example, initially had doubts when he started to teach George Harrison the sitar in 1966.²⁰ Why would anyone become a serious student of a sarangi player, since one could hardly hope to excel at it, let alone make a living from it.

A North American reader might be forgiven for thinking that the motivation was simply money. But other than the first few months,²¹ Sabri Khan and I never entered into a regular exchange of money, this being especially the case once I was "tied" to him as a disciple. Aside from once getting him a turquoise ring (for good luck!), until I brought him to Seattle and had him live in our home for nine months, I don't recall much of an exchange. I made some recordings and copies for him, perhaps some photographs, perhaps gave him some rides in my car, but not money.

I think especially in the case of sarangi players (and to a somewhat different extent, *tabla* players), having a foreign disciple could do nothing but improve the extremely low social status of such players, because of the now well-documented stigma that sarangi players suffered and still do. My guess also is that Keshav Kothari,²² having recommended Sabri Khan to me and introduced me to him, helped to establish a ground base of legitimacy upon which our relationship could develop from then on.

I was led to Keshav Kothari because Harold Gould, who had recently joined the anthropology department at the University of Illinois, provided me with two letters of introduction. One was to the renowned anthropologist, T.N. “Loki” Madan, and the other was to the otherwise unknown Harbans Mathur.²³ Harbans was a senior editor in the Publications Division of the Government of India, and once television began to be regularly broadcast in the late 1970s, he became head of the news division there. Harbans and I actually became best friends. At the time, he lived at Pataudi House, a row of hutments reserved for fairly senior government officials. Keshav lived there as well, and it was through Harbans that I met Keshav. Later on, I was able to meet and interview the great singer Siddheshwari Devi, who also lived there.

I explained to Keshav that I was interested in studying sarangi and he recommended two names, Sabri Khan and one other. I asked him who was the better player and he answered Sabri Khan, and arranged for an introduction. That is how I came to be a disciple of Sabri Khan.

In summary, I would say there was mutual benefit to our relationship. In the long run, I introduced other foreigners to him, most importantly Regula Qureshi.²⁴ I also brought him over to the United States at least twice, with the longer stay definitely providing fiscal benefit for him.²⁵ For me, he was my entry to meeting other musicians, not only during the initial



Fig. 3. Daniel Neuman getting a lesson from his *ustad*, Sabri Khan, in 1969.

fieldwork of 1969-71, but also my the subsequent research in 1976-77 among rural musicians through the person of Shabbir, who became Sabri Khan's student around 1973-74.

Were the facts that there was inequality in our economic status, or that I was a white male, or that I was an American, indices of possible exploitation? There is always the possibility of self-delusion, but I do not see how my relationship with him could be construed as exploitative. I treated him (as I did other musicians with whom I became especially close later on, especially Ustad Yunus Hussain Khan and Ustad Zia Mohiuddin Dagar) with genuine respect, and actually behaved as a disciple, continuing as such through all these years and reaffirmed by the renewal of our vows in the ganda bandhan ceremony of 2011. All this was not feigned. As I came to understand the depth of this quite wondrous musical system, I understood the deep respect one assumed *automatically* for the musicians who were its keepers.

Now whether or not this old story, not published before, works as a kind of reflexive account that provides new insights into my previously published works, I'll leave to the informed reader to decide. Aside from its possible historical value, I'm not certain this autobiographical account would change any interpretations of what I had earlier published. If yes, I am eager to learn what these might be.

In 2011, I was able to observe Sabri Khan's life as the senior member of his family. He had moved from his Old Delhi Mohalla to an artists' colony built at the time of the 1982 Asiad games in Delhi. Modern, more spacious, and in pleasant surroundings, his accommodations could help him to feel satisfied that he had succeeded in making a better life for his family. His daughters were all married with their own children, and all but one of his sons at the time were also married. Two lived abroad, with one of them practicing as a musician in England. His then unmarried son (now married and with a child) continues his father's sarangi tradition, concertizing widely and successfully. His other son is the leader of a group of musicians that entertains in different lighter genres, and has subsequently spent some time in Russia as a teacher in an institution there. His grandson, Suhail Yusuf, is successful internationally, both as a sarangi player and as the leader of groups devoted to crossover genres.

I think Sabri Khan was bemused by the variety of new musical stuff that was happening around him, but he wasn't disturbed, as far as I could tell. The core remained, and remains, Hindustani classical music. He would no more think of discouraging these other kinds of musical activity – college “band” music, wedding and festival music, fusion music, etc. – than would his sons and grandsons think of abandoning the traditional forms of respect

and obeisance to him and their Hindustani tradition. It is possible that if there were tensions, these would be hidden from me, but in one instance involving a local student who was not a relation, Sabri Khan was quite vocal about his complaints (namely that the student wasn't serious and didn't practice enough).

Insofar as I can tell, Sabri Khan moved from his pre-modern²⁶ youth to his postmodern retirement with the remarkable ease and adaptability I have always thought typical of his community. Generational difference there was, but as with the scholars I am discussing, there was very little friction because of it.

This is all the more remarkable when you consider the shift in the place of Indian music writ large in the last couple of decades. It is not only watching the emergence of old genres turned into popular genres such as *ghazal* in the 1980s and Sufi music now; or watching Zakir Hussein on the Charlie Rose show in April of 2009²⁷ or seeing an Indian song win the Academy Award also in 2009;²⁸ but witnessing the whole shift of specific genres such as *Bhangra* being recreated as a new form in England and America, or *Qawwali* being transformed by Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan into an international popular music genre.²⁹ Or consider the establishment, by Academy Award-winner A.R. Rahman, of his Music Conservatory in Chennai, which offers a program in music and music technology and a curriculum with Western and Indian music.³⁰

New Lines of Inquiry

Looking over the post-war ethnomuscape of Anglo-American research³¹ on Indian music, what I find remarkable are both the continuities in themes, and the continuing expansion of our fields of interest, with little in the way of generational frictions, let alone ruptures. If 1964 marks the beginnings of modern American ethnomusicology with the publication of the Ur-texts of Alan Merriam and Bruno Nettl, half a century later we have works that expand greatly the depth of Indian music studies (Merriam 1964, Nettl 1964). Here, I would point to what I called "Ignored and Hidden music traditions of South Asia" (Neuman 2014), in which I referred to work by Morcom (2013), Soneji (2012), and to which I would add the recent dissertation on Hijras by Jeffrey Roy (2015) and Margaret Walker's recent work on Kathak (2014a, 2014b), regional studies and media (Fiol 2012; Schultz 2013), historical studies (Bakhle 2005; Ho 2013; Schofield 2013), dance and popular forms (Morcom 2013; Walker 2014), a single city (Katz 2017), two cities (Williams 2014),

a single instrument (McNeil 2004), as well as further work on Hindustani traditions (Dard Neuman 2004, 2009) to name just a few. And since just 2014 we have had a steady stream of doctoral dissertations (Pettit 2014; Roy 2015; Scarimbolo 2014; Virani 2016; Williams 2014).

But looking back at almost a half century of fieldwork and research in India, I would like to emphasize two points concerning the uniqueness of Indian music as a system, and a concomitant uniqueness about research on it. First, Hindustani music as a practice never *needed* to be rescued, revived, reinterpreted, or reinvented (even though there were many misguided attempts to do so as a nationalist enterprise). Second, studying it required one to become a disciple in the Indian manner, a unique subcontinental relationship that established a very different relationship to one's key informant(s) or consultant(s), as would otherwise have been the case in other places.³²

Perhaps this explains how even where disagreements existed – and these were after all largely nominal – research on Indian music continued to attract new students. When I think about what we knew in 1969 when I started my own research, and what we know now, I understand more fundamentally than ever the value of accumulated knowledge. In this sense, generational frictions have enabled a scholarly grip to move forward, while sustaining a community of scholars that has remained remarkably free of rancour.

The move forward is well illustrated in the case of research on women musicians. If you look at the photograph of distinguished musicians below,³³

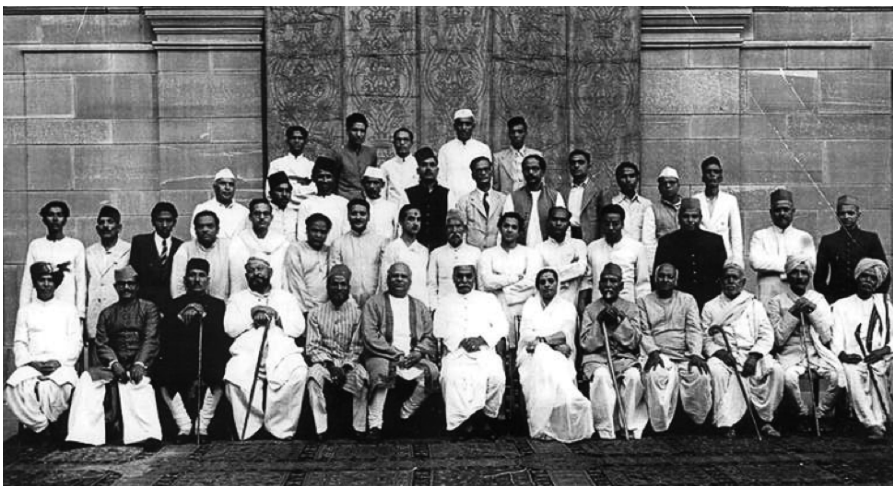


Fig. 4.

you will see only a single female. Some of you will recognize her, the great Kesarbai Kerkar (1892-1977), who vied for the title of greatest vocalist of her era. I never heard a single word that was not expressed with the greatest of respect for, and indeed fear of, her. She was said to have had a terrible temper. So there she was, as far as I know, the first woman to ever have been photographed in a group of musicians. She is sitting to the left of Dr. Rajendra Prasad (1884-1963), India's first president, who served from 1950-1962. The photograph probably dates from 1952. There had of course been women musicians earlier, but mostly they were kept invisible, because of the stigma associated with women who were also public performers, and yet very audible in the early commercial recordings in India, as we also know from the life of Gauhar Jan (Sampath 2010).³⁴

My own interest in women musicians naturally arose out of the fact that the sarangi players with whom I was working had been accompanists of the so-called courtesans, and suffered a serious stigma because of their association with courtesan singers and dancers. Even in the 1970s, there were very few women, from the so-called respectable class, who were singing or playing in public.³⁵ I conducted some limited research in 1970 on one courtesan singer in particular, a study my wife continued with this same individual into the 1990s. But for ethical reasons, we are unable to publish any of this work, as the individuals, and more importantly, their adult children, did not want to be in any way identified.³⁶ When important studies were finally published – and this didn't happen until the beginning of the 2000s³⁷ – courtesans in the major urban centres with formal training in Hindustani music had all died. In India, scholars did not touch this subject at all³⁸ until the new millennium, and tellingly, *never* in music departments.³⁹

Even now, although we have numerous articles about women performers in North India (see note 42), notably by Carol Babiracki and Amelia Maciszewski, there has yet to be a single published article about the social conditions of actual individual courtesans in the Hindustani tradition because of the need for this to remain hidden, secret, and undisclosed.⁴⁰ This was true even though the identities of courtesan performers and their offspring were, as Weidman puts it, often a “public secret” (2003: note 27, 226).

Contrast not Friction

In a little paper published in 2010, Garret Field contrasts my and Jon Higgins' work (Higgins 1976) – the so-called “threatened” view – with Amanda Weidman's (Weidman 2006) and Lakshmi Subramanian's (Subramanian

2006) – reinvented perspective – which provides a quite useful summary of the underlying assumptions from these two periods of ethnomusicological writing.⁴¹ It reminds me of Edward Bruner’s argument “that ethnographies are guided by an implicit narrative structure, by a story we tell about the peoples we study” exemplified by his contrast of Native American narratives of a glorious past replaced by one of exploitation (Bruner 1986: 139).

Max Katz, in his forthcoming book from Wesleyan has, however, the following to say about these different views:

contemporary scholarship contains an apparent conflict between one trajectory that highlights the Hindu nationalist reinvention of India’s “classical” traditions and another that emphasizes the triumph of Muslim hereditary musicians who hold the center of the national stage today. Taken together, however, the key works that address twentieth-century socio-musical change in Hindustani music (e.g., Bakhle 2005; Manuel 1989a; Neuman 1990 [1980]; [Dard] Neuman 2004; Qureshi 1991) complement rather than contradict one another: while the Hindu middle class rose in the twentieth century to dominate the tradition in raw numbers of teachers, students, and performers, a new class of Muslim hereditary artists capable of meeting the demands of the new audience ascended the ranks of celebrity and renown. (Katz 2017: 13-14)

I think that Katz has it essentially right here. As a reminder, however, of these older conditions, intellectually and materially, allow me to offer an archaeology of ethnomusicology in India in order to make a couple of points.

I’ll begin with something known to many of us, but perhaps not so commonly experienced, namely the role of the term “ethnomusicology” in India. In the 1970s, it was a term rare in India, but where it was used, it was limited to discussions about “tribal” music (Bhattacharya 1968) (Chauhan 1973). This is probably why musicians like Ravi Shankar and others disliked the term, as they felt, of course, that theirs was not a “primitive” music. By the late 1980s, an eminent historian would question the legitimacy of a foreigner (me) conducting music research in India at all (Neuman 2014: 235-36).⁴² And indeed there were a number of scholars working in India who didn’t identify with the term.⁴³ But by the new millennium, ethnomusicology was losing its stigma as a term in India. S.A.K. Durga, who completed her PhD in ethnomusicology at Wesleyan (1984), also published a book on ethnomusicology (2006). Lakshmi Subramanian discusses ethnomusicology

(2008), and Goswami uses the term for an overview of Indian music scholarship (2014). And importantly, as the work of the Archive and Research Centre for Ethnomusicology in Delhi became more widely known, the term began to lose its stigma.

But there is another condition between 1970 and now that I have written on but needs emphasizing. It is a mundane and material point, which explains why it is typically not alluded to: I mean the material conditions of conducting fieldwork at that time, and specifically I mean tape recording interviews and music.⁴⁴ In 1969, a spool of recording tape cost about \$8.00. In today's dollar, this comes out to be more than \$50 a spool. When one adds the 400% duty and tariffs imposed in India at the time for such imported material, one hour of recorded tape cost more than \$200! The equivalent digital recording cost today would be well under a dollar. This itself is an important index of the changes that have occurred in the last 40 years.⁴⁵

The theoretical tools of the time included the important contributions of Clifford Geertz and his focus on interpretive anthropology, and for India specifically, the concept of great and little traditions developed at the University of Chicago by Robert Redfield and Milton Singer (Singer 1972). This concept was intended to account for civilizational-wide cultural phenomena such as religion – i.e., the great tradition – and the regional manifestations of such phenomena found in local variety – i.e., the little traditions. In India, accordingly, the Hindustani and Carnatic classical music systems were considered exemplars of the great tradition of Indian classical music, and regional musics such as Rajasthani or genres from UP, Panjab, Maharashtra, and other areas would be exemplars of little traditions. This was not, however, a theoretical schema that was very much used in South Asian ethnomusicological research in the 1960s and 1970s, since the overwhelming focus at that time was on the classical traditions. We were largely engaged with the great tradition of the area's art musics, and by the time interest in regional genres developed, the concept of great and little traditions had fallen from favour as adequate concepts.⁴⁶

The focus on the classical traditions in India is perhaps the reason I believed, as I wrote in the epilogue to the book *Ethnomusicology and Modern Music History*, that it was surprising how little Indian music studies contributed to the more general ethnomusicological theoretical discourse when compared with other regions of the world, particularly sub-Saharan Africa (Neuman 1991). These latter studies early on were never divorced from the political environment in which they were situated, whereas for India, *then*, politics and economics were marginal foci, where they existed at all. I believe, although I offered no conjectures then, that the differences

were related to the keen awareness on the part of American sub-Saharan Africa specialists to the history of slavery and racism in the United States. For Indianists, a parallel keen awareness of the history of colonialism was not nearly as acute as it was to become once postcolonial studies became prominent.

Where we might have made a contribution to theory earlier on – but didn't – was the peculiar, and I would say unique relationship, to which I have already alluded, we had with our gurus and ustads, in which the classic superordinate-subordinate relationship between the outside, usually Western researcher and what was then called the informant and later consultant, was *not* unidirectional. Indeed, in my experience, most scholars involved in Hindustani or Carnatic music research approached their work as modest disciples of their teachers and, in this respect, genuinely assumed the role of disciple with many of the subordinate features of that role. This was as true probably for Harry Powers working with his teacher, Lal Mani Misra,⁴⁷ as it was for Regula and I working with Sabri Khan.

This is all another way of saying that we, and here I am talking about scholars working in India on Indian classical music in the 1960s and 70s (there was hardly any research going on in Pakistan), were very much wrapped up with our love and deep respect for the great tradition of Indian classical music, and we also were very attached to our teachers. Sometimes we invited them as visiting artists to our universities – Zia Mohiuddin Dagar, Sabri Khan, Sharmistha Sen, Yunus Khan, Faiyaz Khan, Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan,⁴⁸ Shujaat Khan, and Akram Khan at the University of Washington – and sometimes as permanent faculty, in the case of T. Vishwanathan and his brother T. Ranganathan at Wesleyan. UCLA has had leaders of their Indian music ensemble almost continuously since 1959.

Our interests were sometimes musicologically focused (Bonnie Wade, Harry Powers, and Nazir Jairazbhoy), or anthropologically (Regula Qureshi and myself). Sometimes our research was on a regional variety, for example Charles Capwell's work on the Bauls of Bengal, but that was rare at the time and he actually began with classical music as a student of sarod. We also had researchers who did not make Indian music their major area of expertise, even though their work was considered important; think of Robert Gottlieb,⁴⁹ a violist, Rebecca Stewart's PhD on tabla (she was otherwise a Western music historian), and Brian Silver on sitar traditions, who was working on his PhD in Urdu at the University of Chicago. But whatever we were working on, we rarely engaged issues that emerged as postcolonial. As I have said, I made a point of emphasizing that although the fact of British colonialism pervaded virtually all aspects of Indian society, it seemed to have largely overlooked

Indian music. And in those rare cases where there was a colonial connection, these appeared consonant with supporting Hindustani music.⁵⁰ Indeed I recently discovered a newspaper account from 1861 about a sitar recital in Delhi being given by an Archdeacon Pratt and “... the Bishop and Chaplains ... seated on the ground beating tom-toms” (Anon. 1861)!

Conclusions

My long and necessarily quite personal view regarding khandani musicians leads me to argue that in most important respects, these musicians largely escaped the colonization of their knowledge system. My evidence for this is summarized in five explicit statements.

1. **KHANDANI MUSICAL VALUES.** One showed deep deference and respect to one’s teachers; devoted oneself to practice (*riaz*) with stories of extraordinary feats of the same, such as a *chilla*;⁵¹ and ideally performed music as an act of worship.
2. **MUSIC WAS TAUGHT TO VERY YOUNG CHILDREN.** They learned music as they learned to talk and walk. Naming things (like raga names) and writing things down were discouraged. Music was not just practiced as a profession; it proceeded very early on as a way of life.
3. **MARRIAGE BETWEEN VARYING DEGREES OF COUSINS.** This was a way to both keep musical knowledge in the lineage and create new musical ties.
4. **THE PRACTICE OF TEACHING WITHOUT PAYMENT.** “Tuitions” were what one called ordinary students who paid a fee. But once the *ganda bandhan* was performed, there was no payment, but rather service in its stead.
5. **A HIGH PREMIUM ON EXPLORING EXISTING IMMANENT MUSICAL KNOWLEDGE,** e.g., practicing one raga for several years to discover more and more about it. Knowing one raga very deeply made access to the others that much easier.

It was these khandani values, I would aver, that sustained an insular and conservative value set regarding their music, and ensured that they would

indeed not look upon colonial music as in any way desirable or superior.

Lineage musicians, often criticized by the nationalists of the “respectable” classes for being ignorant of music theory and for being virtual illiterates, turned out to have been adaptively more equipped to engage the colonial environment in which they found themselves by virtue of being situated “outside the logic of resistance” (Dard Neuman 2004: 18) Certainly they felt consequences, as when their patrons lost or gained wealth and prestige bestowed upon them by the British, but with respect to their music, its knowledge and practice, they had largely only their own internal discourse. They didn’t publish autobiographies and they didn’t publish musicological studies and of course, they didn’t publish music.⁵²

Despite our studying an ever wider array of musical genres, which can give the sense of an ever increasing fragmentation of India’s musical culture, I think India’s particular capacity for change is reflected by her artists, who will continue to develop new genres, as new audiences and new media emerge. But however global the flows of styles, musics, and technologies become, I expect that as they are shaped in India, they will assume a very distinctively Indian quality. This quality lends support to the idea that Indian musical culture, no matter its myriad forms or the depth of its generations, will continue to be a major factor in shaping its sounds for the future. 🍀

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Notes

1. I was on “exchange” from the University of Illinois through a Midwest Universities Consortium program.

2. “Colonial knowledge both enabled conquest and was produced by it; in certain important ways, knowledge was what colonialism was all about. Cultural forms in societies newly classified as “traditional” were reconstructed and transformed by and through this knowledge, which created new categories and oppositions between colonizers and colonized, European and Asian, modern and traditional, West and East.” From Nicholas B. Dirks’s introduction to Cohn (1996).

3. This well-known distinction was first formulated by Partha Chatterjee. “By my reading, anticolonial nationalism creates its own domain of sovereignty within colonial society well before it begins its political battle with colonial power. It does

this by dividing the world of social institutions and practices into two domains – the material and the spiritual. The material is the domain of the “outside,” of the economy and of statecraft, of science and technology, a domain where the West had proved its superiority and the East had succumbed. In this domain, then, Western superiority had to be acknowledged and its accomplishments carefully studied and replicated. The spiritual, on the other hand, is an “inner” domain bearing the “essential” marks of cultural identity” (Chatterjee 1993: 6). This was criticized by Dirks and others as itself an opposition founded on an orientalist assumption (Dirks 2000: 151).

4. There were of course other groups of musicians in the Hindustani practice, including Kathak tabla players of Banaras, Vishnupur sitarists, and vocalists of Bengal, and Maharashtrian Brahman vocalists, as well as important women vocalists. But virtually without exception, the originary musical source and therefore authority derived from tracing back to a Khandani teacher.

5. The reader should understand that I am discussing only hereditary khandani musicians. Musicians in Bengal and Maharashtra did occupy themselves with notation, and indeed I discuss the Bengali case briefly towards the end of this essay. Maula Baksh, a Muslim but not a hereditary lineage musician, also introduced a notation system for his school in Baroda. Indeed his grandson, Inayat Khan, devoted a whole chapter to notation in his book. (Inayat et al. 2016: xxii, 108)

6. Although we stayed in touch over the years, I did not actually work with him – no more lessons or interviews – except in Seattle when he lived with us during the academic year of 1981-82, while he was a visiting artist at the University of Washington, and briefly in 1992 when he was with us in Seattle for about a month.

7. Suhail Yusuf, who is currently a graduate student at Wesleyan.

8. Joep Bor had his first sarangi lesson with Vilayat Khan in Amsterdam in 1966! Two years later, in November 1968, he went to meet Ram Narayan in London and received some basic training there. In January 1971, he went to Bombay to study with him, and also with Abdul Majeed Khan, the accompanist of Kesarbai Kerkar (personal communication). Kim Woodruff, not a researcher, had also just started around this period. Ram Narayan also had a student, Louise Landes Levi. Regula Qureshi perhaps started her initial sarangi lessons in Lucknow in the mid-1960s.

9. Entry to the actual station at the time was uncomplicated; I just walked in with Sabri Khan and later on, alone. Now this would be impossible, because of security concerns.

10. There was indeed real suspicion. It seemed impossible that a foreigner, and an American at that, could really be interested in something as marginal and unimportant as sarangi and Indian music. The Vietnam war was raging, and it was not uncommon for people to assume I was a spy working for the CIA.

11. In fact the only formal study was of Carnatic music with S. B. Ramanathan when he came as a visiting artist to the University of Illinois in 1967.

12. This recording is now available on a CD, made I believe from my original taping of the radio broadcast.

13. All India Radio invited audiences for the Saturday night National Programs to

provide an environment closer to an actual *mahfil*.

14. It should be noted that now many years later, although we have a fairly large number of foreign sitar and sarod players who make a living at it, the few who became somewhat proficient on sarangi, Joep Bor, Regula Qureshi, and perhaps more than any other, Nicolas Magriel, were never in a position to actually make a living at it.

15. Sewing small flat metal disks in gold and silver onto clothing; more generally metal embroidery.

16. For a very useful and detailed account of the family some years later, see Qureshi (2007).

17. Very senior government servants lived what would be considered economically middle class, and could only afford a scooter or motorcycle, not an automobile.

18. I was fortunate in having a grant from the National Institute of Mental Health.

19. I am speaking about this period. There were some who would only take on their own relations as disciples.

20. In a YouTube video taken from a film, you can hear Ravi Shankar say “It is strange to see pop musicians with sitar. I was confused at first. It had so little to do with our classical music. When George Harrison came to me, I didn’t know what to think. But I found he really wanted to learn.” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t79aI-I6ucA>

21. I actually do not remember any regular “tuition” payment, i.e., a payment made in exchange for a lesson, but there must have been some.

22. Keshav Kothari was the head of the Sangeet Natak Akademi at the time. Coincidentally, he was a younger brother of Komal Kothari, with whom I worked two decades later in Rajasthan.

23. Harold Gould, T. N. Madan, and Harbans Mathur had developed a close friendship during their years in Lucknow, I believe in the late 1950s.

24. Also Nicolas Magriel and possibly Kim Woodruff, I can’t remember for sure.

25. Staying with me allowed him to save virtually his entire salary for the academic year, which would have been a lot of money in India at the time.

26. By this I mean simply being raised in a home without the accoutrements of electricity and running water, let alone anything else we might think of as modern. I know this is simplistic, but the contrast with then and now is dramatic.

27. <https://charlierose.com/videos/12877>

28. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/film/oscars/4805048/Slumdog-Millionaire-musicians-missed-out-on-Oscar-glory.html>

29. <http://library.thinkquest.org/04oct/01260/arangetram.html>

30. <http://rahmanweb.blogspot.com/2008/01/learn-music-from-arrahmans-school.html>

31. Just as the French have dominated philosophical thinking since the Second World War, and German (mostly refugees) dominated musicological thinking, albeit also often in English, the English-speaking world of North America, the United Kingdom, and Australia have dominated ethnomusicological studies of India.

32. For a beautiful and nuanced evocation of this special relationship, even in the age of technology, see Weidman (2003).

33. Thanks to Amlan Das Gupta for this photograph. He discusses it in the context of the emerging importance of instrumentalists in Hindustani music and says Ravi Shankar told him he thought the photo was taken in 1952. See Gupta (2012).

34. Weidman (2003) makes a similar point for women performers in the South.

35. I can think of Malabika Kanan, vocal, Sharon Rani, sarod, Kalyani Roy, Joya Bose, and Sharmistha Sen, sitar. There probably were a few more but they were exceedingly rare at the time. The group of now well-known, mostly Maharashtrian women vocalists, coming from the “respectable” classes, only emerged into the spotlight in the 1980s. See Deo (2011).

36. For example, I collected a genealogy of Siddeshwari Devi while she was living in Pataudi House, interested in the fact that it was exclusively a maternal line, except for one male ancestor several generations back. But even now I don’t feel free to publish it.

37. See Babiracki (2004, 2008); Devidayal (2007); Krishnan (2008); Maciszewski (2001, 2006); Morcom (2013); Walker (2014). A dissertation from 1996 did focus on Begum Akhtar (Ollikkala 1996).

38. With one early important exception in Hindi (Nagar 1958)

39. Two seminars on the subject of women performers took place when I was last doing fieldwork in India in 2010-11. The only other attempt of which I am aware was the 1984 women music makers of India seminar that Rita Ganguli had organized. At the 2014 SEM conference, I had organized two roundtable sessions marking this event on its 30th anniversary.

40. An important historical account can be found written by (tellingly) an English department faculty member at Jadavpur University in (Gupta 2005).

41. See Field (2010). Although I discuss the South-North divide in India’s “classical” music divide later in this essay, it is instructive that both these works deal with Carnatic music, which itself parallels Jon Higgin’s unique accomplishment as a commercially recorded foreigner of Indian “classical” music. Also tellingly, the violin made it into the Carnatic system, while hardly making an appearance in the North.

42. As I wrote then, I thought this was more about postcolonial sensitivities.

43. Harold Powers, Joep Bor, and Wim van der Meer for different reasons have eschewed a self-identification with ethnomusicology.

44. I cover this in more detail in Neuman, Daniel M., *Discourse Media 1969:1999*, in *Music Archiving in the World*. Edited by Gabriele Berlin and Arthur Simon, Berlin: Vwb Verlag Für Wissenschaft Und Bildung, 2002.

45. \$1.00 in 1969 was worth \$6.80 in 2017. A good blank reel-to-reel tape cost about 8.00 in 1969, which would be more than \$54 in 2017. With a 400% duty in India at the time, it would cost about \$218 in today’s dollars to record one hour. Source: <http://www.dollartimes.com/calculators/inflation.htm>. Checking eBay in 2017, I could find only two sources of new 7-inch reel-to-reel tape. One available from Greece now costs \$50; the other, cheaper one was \$15.

46. A good example was the emerging interest in *qawwali* music, which was not easily categorized as either classical, folk, or regional.

47. But who was, in contrast to my teacher, a dean and member of the music faculty at Banaras Hindu University, and in that sense of a relatively elite background.

48. Invited by Lorraine Sakata, who had been working with him.

49. A very useful summary and critique of Gottlieb's contributions can be found in Kippen (2002).

50. I am thinking here on the prohibition of the harmonium for broadcast by John Foulds. For a valuable chapter on Foulds, see Linden (2013: 81-106).

51. Ideally a routine of intensive practice in the same place for the same duration for 40 days.

52. Informed readers will immediately think of exceptions: Alladiya Khan's autobiography (Khan, et al. 2000), Hazrat Inayat Khan work on music theory (Inayat, et al. 2016), and Gurudev Patavardhana's book on drumming (Kippen and Patavardhana 2006). These exceptions could be said to prove the rule, but looked at carefully each turns out not to be a real exception. The only lineage musician in this group was Alladiya Khan, and technically he wasn't the author in the classical sense. There are two other khandani cases I might mention as exceptions. One is Vilayat Husain Khan's memoir, which was published in a transliterated Hindi form (1959). The other is a speech made in 1940 but only printed in 1969 by Chand Khan. This last is not available in a public published form.

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