

**Copyright**  
**By**  
**Eriko Kobayashi**  
**2003**

The Dissertation Committee for Eriko Kobayashi certifies that this is the approved version of the following dissertation:

**Hindustani Classical Music Reform Movement  
and the Writing of History, 1900s to 1940s**

Committee:

---

Stephen Slawek, Supervisor

---

Gerard Behague

---

James Brow

---

Veit Erlmann

---

Gail Minault

**Hindustani Classical Music Reform Movement  
and the Writing of History, 1900s to 1940s**

by

**Eriko Kobayashi, M.A., B.F.A.**

**Dissertation**

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of  
the University of Texas at Austin  
in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements  
for the Degree of  
**Doctor of Philosophy**

The University of Texas at Austin

May 2003

## **Acknowledgments**

Many people contributed to this dissertation, and it would not have been possible to write it without the assistance I received from them. I am grateful to all the musicians who agreed to talk to me and helped me during my stay in India in 1997-1998, without any reward on their part. In Delhi, I would like to thank Drs. Shanno Khurana and Sumati Mutatkar, whose articulateness and sober intelligence impressed me very much. In Mumbai, Mr. Ramdas Bhatkal gave me a warm reception and facilitated my meetings with Pt. S.C.R. Bhat, whose wonderful narratives are prominently featured in the dissertation. In Miraj, Mr. Sudhir Pote made my stay easy and enjoyable, and Mr. Balwant Joshi offered me valuable information both about his father and the Gandharva Mahavidyalayas. Ms. Uma Swami prepared copies of original documents for me and took me around in the town. The entire office of A.B.G.M.V. Mandal in Miraj treated me so well; I thoroughly enjoyed my visit. Pt. Balasaheb Poochhwale (Gwalior), Dr. Ajit Singh Paintal (Delhi), and Pt. Narayan Rao Patwardhan (Navi Mumbai) were also warm and encouraging about my studies—especially performance aspect of my studies. Among persons related to the Banaras Hindu University, Pt. Balwant Ray Bhatt, Dr. N. Rajam, and late Prem Lata Sharma talked to me long hours. After coming back to the U.S., I was fortunate to be able to interview Ms. Veena Sahasrabuddhe, who grew up in the atmosphere of the reform and still keeps in touch with the Gandharva movement.

Institutional aids and affiliations are essential for academic research. The American Institute of Indian Studies financially supported me during the main research period, 1997-1998 in India. My stay there as a researcher was possible because of my affiliations with the Delhi University and the University of Mumbai. I thank Professor Debu Chaudhuri and Professor Vidyadhar Vyas for granting me an affiliation with their respective universities. Grants from the University of Texas at Austin (Study Abroad Office, Asian Studies Department, and the School of Music) enabled me to receive language training and conduct a pre-research probe in India, as well as to present preliminary findings at conferences.

I have enough experiences with South Asians to know that they customarily help friends. Nevertheless, it still strikes me how immediately and unpretentiously some people offer hospitality and logistical help, just because I am a friend of someone they like—commonplace in India but impressive for a Japanese. When trying to get some work done in unfamiliar settings of a foreign country, hospitality and logistical help go a long way. Shuchi Kothari, Sheetal Christian, and her family arranged for my travel to and looked after my stay in Vadodara. Navin Kumar and Anita Pattanayak saw to my trip to Gwalior, making sure that I would be well received there. In Gwalior, Mr. Shivendra Kapur and his family helped me immensely, driving me around, introducing me to people, and caring for my daily needs. My roommate, Kasturi Basu, helped me in miscellaneous logistical issues in and around Delhi.

I gained most of my academic knowledge while I was at the University of Texas at Austin. I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Stephen Slawek, who has been so patient with the slow progress of my dissertation. He always stood by his advisees in cases of administrative complications or any other trouble. I am grateful to Professors Gerard Béhague, James Brow, Veit Erlmann, and Gail Minault for being in my dissertation committee and giving me positive vibes. I learned the essentials of ethnomusicology with Dr. Slawek and Dr. Behague, and the fundamentals of South Asian studies with Dr. Brow and Dr. Minault. Dr. Erlmann joined the University of Texas as I was leaving for the fieldwork. I regret very much that I could not take his courses; I sincerely would have liked to. Dr. Minault encouraged me to publish an article during my course work years and always remained encouraging. Stephen Wray in the departmental Graduate Office navigated me through the vast sea of bureaucracy.

When I started the writing process in California, away from my university campus, it was a boon for me to find a workspace outside of home. For letting me work in their office, I especially would like to thank Jitu Khare, Hans Heineken, Manuel d'Abreu, Amit Shah, Sumbal Rafiq, Kevin McTavish and Charles Ouyong. Before joining their office, I had the image of cubicles as an inhospitable (or at least bizarre) workspace of computer engineers—as represented in the comic strip Dilbert. After working in one, however, I came to consider cubicles a great invention. When I moved to Texas from California for the final semesters, I missed the most my cubicle in their office in Sacramento. That space meant a lot to me because having it kick-started the stalled project. I

continued to write in Austin, Texas. In Austin, I am grateful to Amelia Maciszewski and Sunit Sikri, at whose house I have comfortably stayed. They and their friends made me feel welcomed back in Austin and made my sojourn in the heart of Texas enjoyable. So did John Downing and Ash Corea. Their (quasi-Indian) openness to friends' friends impressed and continues to impress me. I very much appreciate their warmth as well as their being real personalities.

I have become a student of ethnomusicology and of South Asia because of many people's influences and many incidents that made me think in certain ways. Many other people and experiences keep me in the field still. This is probably not a place to go over all of these influences, but I mention a few. My parents, especially my mother Kazuko Kobayashi, started me on music. Later, it was because of her support that I could go to a high school in Italy, where I had experiences that led me to ethnomusicology. Also, I would not have been able to complete my graduate studies in the United State without her and her father's (i.e., my grandfather's) assistance. During the master's program, Steven Feld was an inspiring teacher. Arie Kapulkin supported me through the most difficult time of my graduate studies. Yvette Rosser was my buddy in the early phase of the dissertation research. Nabeel Zuberi gave me intellectual stimuli, glimpses of popular music studies, and lots of good music. Lastly, I am grateful to Saghir A. Shaikh for going through all stages of the dissertation project with me. His support and companionship were vital in the process. He was often more worried about my dissertation than I was, and it is a great relief for both of us that the task is finally complete.

Mrs. Anita Slawek helped me with song lyrics quoted in the text. The following people translated documents in Indian languages other than Hindi. For Gujarati, Shuchi Kothari and Alpesh Oza helped me. Marathi documents were translated by Rujuta Karmarkar and Jitendra Khare. For Bengali sources, I owe thanks to Pulak Dutta and Tamotsu Nagai. Saghir Shaikh read Urdu materials for me.

**Hindustani Classical Music Reform Movement  
and the Writing of History, 1900s to 1940s**

Publication No. \_\_\_\_\_

Eriko Kobayashi, Ph.D.

The University of Texas at Austin, 2003

Supervisor: Stephen Slawek

This dissertation deals with the Hindustani music reform movement in the early twentieth century. In the nineteenth century, classical musicians in north India hailed from hereditary communities, which were mostly Muslim. Musical knowledge was seldom available to non-hereditary persons, and performances typically took place in aristocratic environments. The reform aimed at making Hindustani music accessible to the general public by organizing public concerts, establishing music schools, and publishing textbooks. Unlike hereditary musicians, reformers tended to have Hindu middle-class backgrounds. In particular, this dissertation deals with reformers who followed the movements of V. N. Bhatkhande and V. D. Paluskar.

There are two types of historical accounts of the reform. One exalts the reform as a noble effort that liberated the music from its confinement in narrow

aristocratic circles and saved it from morally corrupt professional artists. The second type of history, on the other hand, depicts the reform as a scheme of the Hindu elite to claim Hindustani classical music its own, overtaking its guardianship from Muslim hereditary musicians.

This dissertation responds to these common historical accounts. The first type is problematic because it accepts reformers' discourses to be the neutral representation of the reform's history, while they were clearly ideologically motivated. The reformist discourses dichotomized Hindu educated classes and Muslim uneducated professionals and asserted the former's authority over the latter. At the level of discourse, I concur with the second type of history. Yet, the dichotomous relationship was not the chief issue of reformist discourses. They were concerned more centrally with the notions of progress and civilization. Moreover, from the perspective of practice, the postulated dichotomy between reformers and hereditary musicians was not so clear-cut or antagonistic. Reform processes involved many more factors, such as region, caste, and teaching lineage—not only religion and social class. Additionally, for many reformers, the most significant aspects of their experience pertained to elements such as musicianship and personal relationships, not revitalizing the music or overtaking its guardianship from Muslim professionals. From the viewpoint of practice and micro-history, neither type of common historical accounts of the reform explains the reform's concrete processes.

## Table of Contents

Introduction .....	1
<b>PART I. MODERNITY-CUM-PROGRESS: DISCOURSES OF THE REFORM’S RATIONALES</b>	
Chapter 1. Rationales of the Reform .....	26
Chapter 2. Scientism .....	48
Chapter 3. Classicism and Devotionalism.....	106
<b>PART II. HISTORIOGRAPHY</b>	
Chapter 4. Reformist Historiography of “Indian Music” .....	146
<b>PART III. PROCESSES OF THE REFORM: INTERPRETING PERSONAL HISTORIES</b>	
Chapter 5. Accessibility and Acceptability of Hindustani Music .....	168
Chapter 6. Musicians’ Alliances .....	198
Chapter 7. Narratives of Personal Experiences.....	253
Chapter 8. Problems of Reading the Past with a Present Perspective.....	267
Chapter 9. Toward a Micro-history of the Reform Movement .....	278
Conclusion.....	288
Bibliography.....	297
Vita .....	312

## **Introduction**

### **A. BRIEF BACKGROUND**

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Hindustani classical music underwent a number of significant changes—changes that have great bearing on today’s condition of the music and its place in society. In the nineteenth century, musical knowledge was largely in the hands of professional musicians who hailed from hereditary communities that were predominantly Muslim. The primary venues of performance consisted of princely and other wealthy households and courtesan salons. It was an exclusive courtly/salon music performed by hereditary specialists. The general public did not have much access to classical music. Occasions to listen to classical music were few, and the chances of learning it were even slimmer. This condition continued into the early twentieth century, with gradual changes simultaneously taking place mainly through the catalyst of a reform movement. This movement appeared in the late nineteenth century but gained much momentum after the start of the twentieth century. The reform movement endeavored to make Hindustani classical music widely accessible by organizing ticketed public concerts, establishing music schools, and publishing textbooks. Unlike the traditional professional musicians, reform leaders tended to have Hindu (often Brahman) middle-class backgrounds. They tended to emphasize the Hindu religious element in classical music. All the transformations—public concerts, institutional transmission, mixed backgrounds

of musicians, and the Hindu conception of classical music—constitute the very foundation for today’s condition of Hindustani music culture. In that sense, understanding the early twentieth century reform movement is crucial for the comprehension of Hindustani music today.

The Hindustani music reform movement was not monolithic, however. It had many factions, was regionally diverse, and stretched chronologically across the period of mid-nineteenth century to mid-twentieth century. In this dissertation, I focus on the strands of the movement started by Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande (1860-1936) and Vishnu Digambar Paluskar (1872-1931). In today’s literature, Bhatkhande and Paluskar represent the reform movement more than any other groups or individuals. Paluskar’s public concert in 1897 is generally believed to be the first ticketed, therefore truly public, concert of Hindustani classical music. Ticketed concerts later became commonplace.<sup>1</sup> Bhatkhande convened a series of large-scale music conferences, the All-India Music Conference, starting in 1916. These conferences offered another kind of venue for the interested public to access Hindustani classical music and its knowledge by purchasing tickets. The conferences consisted of live performances, research papers and discussions, reformist manifestos, and dignitaries’ speeches. Similar conferences followed suit, although live performances became, from the 1920s,

---

<sup>1</sup> Although started at the turn of the century, ticketed public concerts did not become a dependable source of income for musicians until the mid-1930s and later (Purohit 1988: 871). In that sense, it is anachronistic to depict Paluskar—as the reform’s standard historical account does—as the one who liberated classical music from the confines of the feudal world and launched musicians into “modern” economic independence. The interpretation is based on reading back the history from a present perspective. Although ticketed concerts constitute a major source of income for performing artists now, this situation did not exist and was not fully foreseen at the turn of the century.

the mainstay of music conferences at the expense of research papers or discussions. The two reform leaders were particularly active in the field of music education. Paluskar established the first two schools of Gandharva Mahavidyalaya (in 1901 and 1908), which later expanded into a large network of schools encompassing many founded by his disciples and associates. Bhatkhande organized the Madhav Sangeet Vidyalaya (hereafter Madhav Music College) (1918) and the Marris College of Hindustani Music (hereafter Marris College) (1926), in which his textbooks and teaching methods were put to use. These two Colleges, especially the Marris College, were highly influential till the mid-twentieth century. Apart from the two major schools, Bhatkhande organized, reorganized, or advised many other music schools, which adopted his teaching system and textbooks. The two reform leaders have come to be considered the epitome of the music reform, so much so that accounts of the reform movement commonly deal with Bhatkhande and Paluskar exclusively, to the detriment of many other reformers.

## **B. STATEMENT OF THE TOPIC AND RESEARCH GOALS**

Currently, there are two major types of historical narrative about the music reform movements of Bhatkhande and Paluskar. The first type of history usually comes from the pen of the two leaders' followers—typically disciples or disciples' disciples. This type of historical narrative glorifies the reform and extols the two leaders as visionaries or even saviors of Hindustani classical music. Consequently, this history is uncritical of the reform leaders' words and reiterates

them as the explanation of the history. The history of the reform is represented in accordance with reformist discourses and ideologies. In this version of history, the reform movement revived Hindustani classical music, uplifting it from the degenerate state it had suffered in the hands of “ignorant” musicians from the professional communities. Through the reform movement, the music became spread among the general public and no longer monopolized by the professional musicians. On the other hand, the second kind of historical narrative is critical of the reform movement. This version of history comes from scholars who have Marxist influences, directly or indirectly. The authors consider the reformist discourses either as manifestations of bourgeois ideologies or as a version of Hindu nationalist discourses, which essentialized differences between Hindu and Muslim communities and defined Indian culture in Hindu terms. In this portrayal, reformers utilized bourgeois nationalist ideologies to overpower Muslim hereditary musicians who were the traditional guardians of the music. The second type of history is critical of the reformist discourses but still uses them as the basis of representing the reform.

I am not comfortable with either type of history. Neither version of the overriding scheme of the reform fits well with the data I have concerning the reform processes. Both kinds of history raise important issues—for instance, the general public’s view of hereditary musicians or the involvement of Hindu nationalist discourses. Nevertheless, neither historical narrative fully succeeds in explaining reform processes, especially when it comes to concrete instances in the reform process. Reformers I interviewed did not talk about the reform as a

glorious movement and noble effort, which rescued Hindustani classical music from stingy and disreputable professionals and revitalized it by making it respectable and available for the general public. This interpretation of the reform seldom appeared in accounts of specific incidents or specific people in the reform movement. That is, although the reform participants accepted the first type of history as a general account of the reform, that history was not so relevant as a mode of explaining their concrete experiences of the reform. Similarly, the questions of regaining Hindustani classical music for educated Hindus constituted a non-issue as guiding principles of reform's practices. These issues are certainly relevant in the reformers' experiences, but they did not determine concrete reform processes. For the reform participants, significant aspects of their experience of the reform lay elsewhere. In the common characterization, the reform saved the music from the terrible condition it suffered in the hands of hereditary professionals or, inversely, the reform appropriated the music from its traditional, rightful custodians and misrepresented it with inflexible rules and notations. Despite these widespread characterizations, concrete situations were never so well defined, and specific musicians were never so well confined into group A or group B. Too large a portion of concrete incidents during the reform fails to fit either of the historical narratives.

I remain skeptical toward both approaches to writing the reform's history. Nevertheless, I am sympathetic to the second approach as it engages the necessary questions of power, especially in relation to religious community and social class. The second, critical history arose in response to the first,

hagiographical history. The first type of literature accepts as an axiom that the reformers' activities constituted a pursuit of truth (not negotiations of power). Religious community and social class are not issues to be considered; they are obstacles in the way of truth. In North American academia, at least, such an assumption was possible only until the mid-twentieth century, when the grand narratives of social progress, stages of civilization, and classicist authority were relatively unquestioned. Reformers' words as well as the standard (i.e., the first type) history of the reform contain abundant implications of power relationships between different social groups. With those materials and in the environment of current academia that leaves no claim to truth unexamined, discounting power as an element of consideration would constitute something of an academic escapism.

Yet, religious community and social class were not the exclusive tenets of the reform movement, however relevant they may have been. Though retrospectively important, they did not form the core of reformist objectives. In representing the reform, the second type of history tends to overemphasize religious community and social class as motivating forces or central dynamics of the reform. The first type of history, on the other hand, overemphasizes Muslim professional musicians as obstacles to reformist efforts. Neither interpretation is very well supported by information on specific incidents during the reform.

As a response to the problem, I undertake two different but related tasks. First, I interpret reformist discourses from perspectives other than the religious community and social class (i.e., the dichotomy between educated Hindu reformers and Muslim hereditary professionals). Reformist discourses

encompassed a vast range of topics. The ideas of civilized society, modern progress, and romantic nationalism were the most central rationales as reformers tried to justify their movement. Overshadowing hereditary musicians and defining classical music as Hindu were long-term results and not a primary rationale of the reform. While the first task deals with ideological aspects of the reform, the second task is concerned with practices. I use specific instances of the reform process to demonstrate that the religious community and social class were not so central to experiences and processes of the reform. The distinction between educated Hindu middle-class reformers and (uneducated) Muslim hereditary professionals emerges most clearly in a particular kind of reformist discourses—formal ones uttered at large venues and published (especially in English). This type of reformist discourse is best analyzed qua discourse or as reformist ideology; it is not a very good guideline for explaining activities. Discerning from details of reformers' activities, reformers and hereditary musicians did not form such clear-cut, dichotomous, and antagonistic groups. Reformers' speeches and actions were not necessarily consistent. The reform processes were extremely mixed and uneven, making it difficult to interpret the reform with any overarching guiding principle. I aim to present a more pluralized picture of the reform that includes many factors such as teaching lineages, local caste communities, regional connections, family circumstances, and so forth—not only social class and religious community.

By and large, the reform movement was concerned with the social and pedagogical aspects of Hindustani music. The reform hastened changes in social

contexts of the music and affected the general public's conceptualization of Hindustani music. That is, the image of classical music shifted from sensual entertainment for the nobility to a classical, high art music that springs from an ancient tradition and constitutes part of Indian national culture (by this "shift," I mean altered tendencies, not an absolute transformation). On the other hand, the reform's effect is not very evident in the sound of Hindustani classical music. Except for song texts and choices of compositions, reformers did not influence raga sounds in any unambiguous manner. Some reform leaders—particularly those associated with Bhatkhande—listed the standardization of ragas as one of the reform's chief objectives. This effort proved to be controversial, and performing artists often resisted the standardization or ignored it (discussed in Chapter 2). It is difficult to say, therefore, to what extent the reformist ideology of standardization affected the music of performing artists. Some degree of standardization of ragas seems to have taken place through the course of the twentieth century. However, the process did not occur singularly due to the reformist music education. The availability of other performers' recordings through media may constitute a more direct reason for the increased consistency of ragas. Determining the degree of the standardization and pinpointing its causes are outside the scope of the present dissertation. This dissertation, therefore, does not deal with musical examples and musicological analysis.

### **C. LITERATURE REVIEW**

I elaborate on the currently common historical narratives.

## 1. The Deferential First Type of History

The best-known works in the first category of reform history are biographical. Indian musicology has produced a number of biographical works on Bhatkhande and Paluskar. Guranditta Khanna (1930), V. R. Athavale (1967), B. R. Deodhar (1971), and V. N. Patwardhan (in the 1950s) wrote biographies of Vishnu Digambar Paluskar. There are also anthologies about Paluskar consisting of contributions from disciples and associates; Akhil Bharatiya Gandharva Mahavidyalaya Mandal (1974) and Janaki Patwardhan (1972) fall under this category. On Bhatkhande, his chief disciple S. N. Ratanjankar wrote his biographies in English (1967) and in Marathi (1971). Bhupinder Seetal's dissertation (1969) and Sobhana Nayar's book (1989) focus on Bhatkhande's work rather than his life. Prabhakar Chinchore (1966) edited a collection of articles contributed by many associates; the anthology also includes reproductions of Bhatkhande's letters and other archival materials. In addition to the book-length publications, numerous magazine and newspaper articles exist. Music journals such as *Sangit*, *Sangit Kala Vihar*, *Journal of the Indian Musicological Society*, and *The Journal of the Music Academy* have carried a steady flow of articles about Bhatkhande and Paluskar since the 1940s. The number of such articles dwindled after the 1980s, but other kinds of publications in the 1980s and 1990s compensate for the declining number of articles. For instance, several collections of biographies appeared in the past two decades; the collections include hefty chapters on Bhatkhande and Paluskar and thus maintain the relevance of information about the two leaders in recent years (e.g., Deodhar 1993, Deshpande

1989, Garg 1984, Misra 1981 and 1990). The same group of authors contributes articles to mainstream newspapers and magazines. Therefore, this group of historical narratives is the most widely read and influential in India and often abroad.

This standard literature agrees that the prevailing attitude toward Hindustani classical music among the educated middle-classes was that of suspicion in the early twentieth century. They associated the music with the “immoral” courtesan culture, the “decadent” life style of the aristocracy, and the “low classes” of hereditary musicians’ castes. That is, classical music was partly performed by “prostitutes,” and its performances took place together with debauchery and the consumption of alcohol (which the majority of Indians were unaccustomed to at the time). Professional musicians too are depicted to have had the vices of drinking and smoking—tobacco, opium, or hashish. Thus, the general public perceived classical music to be a profession for the debased, and parents of good families normally did not allow their children to learn this type of music. Classical music and musicians were disreputable among the middle-classes, especially the educated. Since musicians were not respected, they often suffered maltreatment. Paluskar’s biographies often mention that his guru, as a musician and an employee of the court, received callous treatment from the ruler of Miraj. For instance, he was not invited to events to which all other important members of the town were invited. Paluskar’s reform was partly motivated by such maltreatment of musicians (e.g., Athavale 1967: 7-10).

In addition, much secrecy surrounded the knowledge of Hindustani classical music in the early twentieth century. If an educated person became interested in classical music, he was not able to study it because hereditary musicians then exclusively taught male members of their own lineage. Sometimes, a hereditary master did not teach even his already accepted students properly, withholding information or not giving regular lessons. Susheela Misra depicts the situation disparagingly.

Music had become the monopoly of a small coterie of illiterate professionals who jealously guarded their art. These narrow-minded custodians of music took care not to create rivals out of their own pupils! (Misra 1985: 11)

Due to the social stigma and inaccessibility, Hindustani classical music was a forbidden fruit for the educated general public. Some authors went so far as to state that the Indian “masses were deprived of their *birthright*—the glorious traditional music of their own land” (Misra 1985: 11, my emphasis).

The first type of literature credits Bhatkhande and Paluskar as pioneers in disrupting this condition and reestablishing Hindustani classical music in the midst of the general public.<sup>2</sup> Through their own examples and the music institutions they founded, the two leaders made classical music and the musical profession respectable in the eyes of formerly scornful middle-classes. Paluskar maintained a dignified demeanor and appearance in public, easily mingled with luminaries, and impressed upon society that the musical profession was as respectable as any other learned professions; indeed, in his view classical

---

<sup>2</sup> While the two leaders’ influences were enormous, they were not exactly “pioneers.” Michael Rosse (1995) gathered in one place much information on Hindustani music reformers in the nineteenth century, starting several decades before Bhatkhande and Paluskar.

musicians were not inferior to doctors or lawyers. Paluskar participated in nationalist conventions and rallies (of the Congress Party) and thereby demonstrated that classical musicians could be good and conscientious citizens. On the other hand, Bhatkhande painstakingly studied documents concerning the history and theory of classical music. He collected numerous compositions from hereditary musicians of different gharanas<sup>3</sup> and compiled them into a cohesive body of knowledge. Based on the amassed information, he “systematized” the music by developing a comprehensive theory of Hindustani ragas. Both leaders made the knowledge of Hindustani classical music available to anyone interested through the aforementioned schools they established. The schools’ institutional setting provided an acceptable venue for people of “respectable” backgrounds to learn as well as—during school functions—perform Hindustani music. Along with public concerts and conferences, music schools brought classical music within reach of the respectable general public. In addition, Bhatkhande and Paluskar promoted Hindustani classical music through publishing books on music, especially textbooks. In order to do so, the reform leaders developed notation systems, which greatly facilitated the recording as well as dissemination of the music. According to the first type of historical narrative, the reform movement uplifted Hindustani classical music from its former corrupt environment and practitioners. The reform “revived” classical music by restoring its social esteem and bringing the gospel of music to the public at large.

---

<sup>3</sup> A gharana could be translated as a school of music defined by performance style and teaching lineage.

## **2. The Critical Second Type of History**

On the other hand, the second type of historical narrative is critical of the reform movement as it was carried out by Bhatkhande, Paluskar, and their associates. Authors of this kind of history generally look at power negotiations that the reformers engaged in vis-à-vis traditional performers (i.e., Muslim hereditary musicians). I consider Vinayak Purohit (1988), Regula Qureshi (1991, 1999, 2002), Janaki Bakhle (2002), and my earlier work (Kobayashi 1995) to be in this category. These authors have different orientations and may not be happy to be grouped together. Purohit is a sociologist with a traditional Marxist bent, a very common feature among Indian intellectuals of earlier generations. Qureshi, an ethnomusicologist with a background in anthropology, also has influences of Marxism and socialism. Bakhle, a historian, incorporates arguments of Subaltern group of historians, who typically have solid training in Marxist theories. Despite the differences, all of these authors are sensitive to power relations between the reformers—especially Bhatkhande—and hereditary musicians, and discuss effects or implications the former's actions had on the latter.

The authors of the second type of historical narrative assess the reform to be defective in certain areas. The first issue concerns the reform's colonially induced penchant toward the scientific. The theoretically oriented reformers such as Bhatkhande conceptualized Hindustani classical music too rigidly, trying to establish "laws" of the music. Their overtly rule-bound theory of ragas failed to understand the reality of performed ragas. In Purohit's opinion, Bhatkhande could not grasp the essential structure of Hindustani music performance—the tiers

of raga, gharana, composition, artist, and occasion—because of his legal mode of thinking (Purohit 1988: 832-3, 842-3).<sup>4</sup> Another author, Bakhle, characterizes the use of notation to be a “colonially appropriative gesture toward Indian music” (Bakhle 2002: 12). The reformers submitted to this gesture and promoted notations. Notations, however, failed to convey the central aesthetic feature of Hindustani classical music—fluidity of ragas in performance. Bakhle, too, points out the reformers’ deficiency in responding to the essence of performed music. Purohit criticizes a number of reformers who campaigned for the use of notation (S. M. Tagore, Maula Baksh, Bhatkhande, Paluskar, etc.) for employing notation as a means of intimidating traditional musicians who could not read notation (Purohit 1988: 866).

Another issue on which the second type of history focuses its critique is the reform’s strong Hindu orientation. The schools established by Paluskar and Bhatkhande had mostly Hindu students, many of them Brahmins. The reform movement in general represented Hindustani classical music as essentially Hindu, “Muslim influences” or contributions being rather recent and not as fundamental as the music’s Hindu roots. The majority of reformers built their views of music theory and history on the basis of Sanskrit literature (or so they claimed). Reformist speeches exalted the Hindu spiritual significance as the fundamental experience of classical music. Textbooks largely contained compositions with devotional text content. The reform advanced Hindu religiosity in classical music. As Bakhle succinctly puts, the Hindu religiosity was expressed as a

---

<sup>4</sup> Bhatkhande was a practicing lawyer for over twenty years before he decided to concentrate on his work on music in 1910.

“paradigm of public culture” rather than a matter of individual faith; and it was expressed so under the banner of national secularism or secular nationalism (Bakhle 2002: 334-335). Paluskar embodied this facet of the reform as he upheld the singing of devotional songs, acted like a religious leader, and displayed his religiosity on the stage of secular nationalist of Congress Party activities. Purohit asserts that Bhatkhande had communalist values (1988: 873), and Bakhle points out Bhatkhande’s anti-Muslim views expressed in his writings (2002: chapter 3). According to Qureshi, the norm of a Hinduized conception of Hindustani classical music has by now co-opted Muslim hereditary musicians too (1991: 164).

In general, the second type of history assumes that the reform constituted an elite or bourgeois movement. Purohit labels Bhatkhande a representative of the “bourgeois zamindar<sup>5</sup>” class, as he uses that precarious label as if it were an explanation for the faultiness of Bhatkhande’s raga theory (1988: 832-3, 842). Qureshi, on the other hand, considers that the reformers represent one type of musical knowledge that is Hindu, carried by educated middle-classes, and backed by the authority founded in written texts. The “other type” of knowledge is Muslim, passed on among service professionals through oral tradition” (1991: 152 and passim). In the second type of history, reformers were not only a middle-class elite but also (for want of a better phrase) a westernized elite (Qureshi 1991). They embraced western ideas in general (ideas of schools, notations, etc.) or manifested influences of Orientalist thought in particular. Bhatkhande’s work represents “Orientalized academism” for Purohit (1988: 874). Bakhle argues that

---

<sup>5</sup> Zamindar means landlord, often those who gained the ownership with the aid of the British colonial government.

Hindu religiosity in classical music had colonial elements in its generation (2002: chapter 4).

My earlier work demonstrated the close affinity between the reformist-formulated history of Indian music and Orientalist-formulated history of Indian civilization. Drawing on earlier scholars' analyses of orientalist discourses in relation to socio-political power negotiations, I interpreted the reformist version of music history as a discourse of power that justified educated Hindus' entry into the field classical music—a field formerly dominated by Muslim hereditary musicians (Kobayashi 1995). In general, the authors of the second type of historical narrative are more sensitive to issues of power relations and negotiations than the first group of authors.

The second type of historical narrative shares a foundation with or is informed by the large body of research that examines colonialism, orientalism, and nationalism—especially in view of their contributions to currently pervasive notions about the Indian society and history (e.g., the notion of caste). This type of research could appear under the rubrics of discourse analysis, Subaltern studies, or postcolonial studies, though not limited to these categories. A considerable portion of the literature deals with discourse. The basic premise of this type of literature is that knowledge and cultural discourse are never neutral but inextricably implicated in social relations of power. Among various topics, the ones particularly relevant to my dissertation concern the dichotomization of identities into Hindu and Muslim (e.g., Pandey 1990, Dalmia and von Stietencron eds. 1995, King 1994, Ludden ed. 1996) and the role of colonialism and

orientalist scholarship in formulating conceptions of Indian society (e.g., Nandy 1983, Chatterjee 1986 and 1993, Inden 1990, Pandey 1990, Breckenridge and van der Veer 1993, Prakash 1992).

On the topic of Hindu-Muslim demarcation, Gyanendra Pandey (1990) examines cases of so-called Hindu-Muslim conflicts in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He finds that violent incidents involving complex and contextually specific factors were all discursively reduced to Hindu-Muslim communal conflicts. In colonial documents, such conflicts represented a backward substitute in the East of rational nationalism. In nationalist scholarship, communalism<sup>6</sup> represented a misguided hindrance to the efforts of secular nationalism. Both types of authors stripped the conflicts of their specific contexts and interpreted them in terms of “Hindu-Muslim” strife according to the authors’ own schemes of thought.

On the topic of orientalism, Ronald Inden’s extensive critique of Indology (1990) argues that received wisdom about India, such as rigid caste system or village economy, are constructs of orientalist scholarship. Orientalist portrayals of India were construed through essentialist binary oppositions, which posited India as the Other (and the past) of the post-Enlightenment Europe. By predetermining India as the alter ego, the Orientalist representations (discursively) deprived Indians of agency to make their own history and society. Many scholars discussed relationships between colonial/orientalist discourse and Indian nationalist discourse. For instance, Partha Chatterjee (1986) characterizes

---

<sup>6</sup> In the South Asian context, “communalism” refers to antagonism between different religious groups, typically between Hindu and Muslim “communities.”

Indian nationalist discourse as “derivative” discourse, which draws on colonial discourse to formulate Indian identities but does so selectively and in accordance with nationalists’ own agendas.

The studies listed above examine the construction of knowledge, and such studies inevitably rely on discourse as objects of their investigation. The criticism that this type of literature reduces material experience into discourse (Ahmad 1992, Eaton 2000, Parry 1994, etc.) is warranted for extreme cases and needs to be heeded. Nonetheless, knowledge and ideology are primarily lodged in discourse (though not exclusively so), and this type of literature undeniably enhanced the understanding of the structure of knowledge and ideology. The anthology edited by Breckenridge and van der Veer (1993) adds the important insight that constructed knowledge is not only discursive but can become experientially substantiated through implementation into laws and institutions. In addition, ideas and representations are not only reflective but also constitutive of experience (Appadurai 1991, 1996) or social force (Hall 1996), and I see no reason why discourse and material experience, or discourse and historical contingency, should be considered dichotomous.

The critique of colonial/orientalist/nationalist knowledge is relevant for the Hindustani music reform movement because the reformers used ideas and discourses that were shaped through their colonial, orientalist, and Indian nationalist usages.

#### **D. FIELDWORK AND METHODOLOGY**

I conducted fieldwork for this dissertation from September 1997 to August 1998 with the support of the American Institute for Indian Studies. Due to the historical nature of the project, the fieldwork consisted of library and archival research and interviews with reform participants. I focused on the following reformist institutions for collecting information: (1) the Bhatkhande University of Hindustani Music (Lucknow, formerly Marris College), (2) Madhav Music College (Gwalior), (3) the Faculty of Performing Arts at the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda (Vadodara, formerly the School of Indian Music), (4) Akhil Bharatiya Gandharva Mahavidyalaya Mandal (Miraj), (5) Gandharva Mahavidyalaya, Delhi (Delhi), and (6) the Faculty of Music and Fine Arts at the Banaras Hindu University (Varanasi). The first three institutions are associated with Bhatkhande, and Paluskar's disciples established the other three. (The original two Gandharva Mahavidyalayas of Paluskar are long defunct.) About half of the interviews were with musicians who attended the reformist schools in their early stages, for the most part Marris College, Madhav Music College, and the School of Indian Music in Baroda. The other interviews were with sons and disciples of those who attended the reformist institutions, in particular Paluskar's two Gandharva Mahavidyalayas. Instead of traditional ethnomusicological fieldwork, in which locality has a vital significance, my fieldwork entailed travels to the above reformist institutions as well as to wherever the interviewees resided.

Within India, much has been published and is still being published about the reform movement by its participants. A large number of publications about

Bhatkhande and Paluskar appeared from the 1940s to 1970s—as books but mostly in the form of journal articles (and some newspaper articles). The last two decades saw publications about music reformers of the subsequent generation such as S. N. Ratanjankar, Bhatkhande’s prime disciple. A year of stay in India enabled me to collect these publications. Large music libraries hold many of the secondary sources, but a sizable portion of them were obtainable only from relevant individuals (especially commemoration volumes and anniversary souvenirs). Original documents and publications from the early twentieth century were difficult to find. The music schools generally do not maintain documents of their past before the 1950s or 1960s. One exception was the Akhil Bharatiya Gandharva Mahavidyalaya Mandal (hereafter A.B.G.M.V. Mandal) in Miraj, where the staff preserves original textbooks, newsletters, annual reports, admission papers, and account books of the first two Gandharva Mahavidyalayas, ranging in time from the 1900s to 1930s. The State Archives of U.P. (a region located in north central India) hold original documents that concern the Marris College in the 1920s and 1930s. Most of them relate to financial reports and requests for state funding. I found some other early twentieth century publications related to the reform at the libraries of the following institutions—the Sangit Natak Academy (Delhi), American Institute of Indian Studies (Delhi), Gandharva Mahavidyalaya (Vashi), National Centre for Performing Arts (Mumbai), and British Library (London). Primary sources at these locations largely consist of original textbooks and conference reports.

Several languages are used in the written sources: English, Hindi, Marathi, Gujarati, Bengali, and Urdu. I do not specify my quotations' original languages in the body of the text. The bibliography marks materials written in languages other than English. Translations from Hindi are mine. The individuals I mention in the acknowledgement translated materials written in Marathi, Gujarati, Bengali, and Urdu.

Most interviews were conducted in English, interspersed with occasional Hindi. (The interviewees, though fluent in English, switched to Hindi for quoted speech—a phenomenon probably interesting to sociolinguists.) Some interviews were carried out in Hindi, while a few interviewees mixed Hindi and English.<sup>7</sup> I do not indicate which language was originally used when I quote these interviews in the dissertation. All translation is mine in the quotations, unless otherwise marked. Someone usually accompanied me for the interviews conducted in Hindi, translating or clarifying the interview content now and then. Interview questions slightly varied each time in order to accommodate individual cases. For the most part, however, the questions centered on the same topics: conditions of a reformist institution, the particular reformer's life, and early twentieth century atmosphere as regards social acceptability of classical music and relationships between reformers and hereditary musicians. On conditions of a reformist music school, I asked about numbers and types of students, numbers and types of teachers, curriculum, school routines, school events, difficulties the school

---

<sup>7</sup> The interviews in Hindi were with S. C. R. Bhat, Balasaheb Poochhwale, Madhu Sudan Joshi, and Mubarak Ali Khan. Those who mixed Hindi and English are Pramod Chandra Maudgalaya and Babulal Gupta.

initially had, and hereditary musicians' relationships with the school. On the reformers' lives, questions concerned how they came to learn classical music, how they came to join the reformist institutions, the families' reactions to their becoming musicians, memorable incidents at the schools and later, jobs after graduation, their relationships with hereditary musicians, and social prejudice against classical music, if they experienced any.

#### **E. CHAPTERS OF THE DISSERTATION**

The following body of text mainly consists of two large sections (Parts I and III), corresponding to the two tasks I undertake. Part I engages with the first task of reading reformist discourses from the perspectives of “civilized” society, modern “progress,” and romantic nationalism—perspectives more central to the reform objectives than the perspectives that relate to the reformers' saving/overtaking classical music from hereditary musicians. Chapter 1 explicates reform rationales, extracted from reform leaders' speeches and writings in the first decades of the twentieth century. The rationales centered on the notions of civilization and of salvage/revival. The reformers argued that the “educated classes” must learn to appreciate classical music because such appreciation was the sign of a civilized society and indexed the nation's stage of civilization. In addition, the reformers validated their movement as the salvage and revival of national culture, which had suffered debasement in the immediate past.

Chapters 2 and 3 pertain to reformers' discourses about methods of revitalizing the music and making it acceptable to the gentle society. One major proposed method was to promote scientific study and teaching of the music. Chapter 2 discusses specific reformist efforts to make Hindustani classical music "scientific." The other approach to save the music from debasement and make it polite-society friendly was to promote devotionalism and classicism. Chapter 3 describes reformist discourses that repeatedly characterized Hindustani classical music to be "high art," "sacred art," and "divine art." For the reformers, these descriptions represented the true nature of the art; classical music was not mere secular entertainment performed for the sake of pleasure and money. Besides the means of speeches and writings, reformers promoted devotionalism and classicism through song lyrics.

Par II, which is brief and consists only of Chapter 4, also deals with the discursive aspect of the reform movement. The chapter summarizes the reformist representation of the history of Hindustani classical music, from antiquity to the their own times. This history starts with ancient glory, passes through medieval decline, falls into the utmost deterioration in the recent past, and envisioned a modern revival. The standard account of the reform movement (i.e., type one account) usually replicates the reformist representation of music history, including the reformers' self-representation of their movement. This brief chapter aims to show that the music history and the history of the reform both constitute discourses of power. They discursively polarize "educated Hindus from good families" and "uneducated Muslim hereditary professional," and define the latter

to be the problems of music history. Thus, despite my reservations about such discourse's relevance to reform practice, I do agree that power relations centered on religious community and social class exist rather explicitly within the sphere of discourses about music history.

Part III discusses the dissertation's second task: to demonstrate discrepancies between reformist discourses and practices. I draw on my interviews as well as other specific biographical information culled from secondary sources. Chapter 5 asks the questions: (1) how difficult was it for the general public to find a classical music teacher, and (2) how unacceptable was Hindustani classical music to the general public in the early twentieth century? Reformist literature tends to emphasize the inaccessibility of musical knowledge and the social prejudice that had to be overcome. The conventional literature's depictions notwithstanding, it seems that classical music teachers were not so uncommon by the very early twentieth century, and social prejudice was present, but nowhere near the conventional literature's description. Chapter 6 elucidates that in practice reformers and hereditary musicians did not form clearly defined and oppositional groups. Practically speaking, musicians' alliances depended on complex combinations of region, ethnicity, local caste community, teaching lineage, stylistic preference, and personal connections—as well as religion and the status of heredity. Chapter 7 compares interviewed reformers' experiential narratives with formally expressed reform objectives and ideologies. The experiential stories and reformist discourses exhibit differences in choices of themes and topics, and the differences appear in consistent patterns. The

discrepancies warn against interpreting the reform movement solely on the basis of reformist discourses. Such an interpretation would miss elements that were of primary importance in participants' concrete experiences. Reading and hearing about the past inevitably entails problems of interpreting past discourses with present conceptions. Chapter 8 considers a few such problems that require awareness and caution. For instance, the ideas of "Hindu" and "Muslim" identities had different connotations in the very early twentieth century. Also, the early twentieth century reformers were not as powerful as their followers seem to claim—and not as powerful as reform-type musicians are at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The reformers' discourse of power does not translate into their having power. The final Chapter 9 reflects on the concept of micro-history. So far, I implied that the common historical narratives about the reform (both the first and second types) are based on the discursive aspects of the reform, rather than its practices. The difference between the conventional histories of the reform and the history of reform practices can also be understood as the difference between macro-history and micro-history. Micro-history purports to depict history based on individual experiences, history that has many individual centers rather than single linear subject, and history that is not a unified process but inevitably has uneven and multifaceted processes. In the course of critiquing the conventional histories, I hope to have presented a portrayal of the reform that is micro-historical.

## **PART I: MODERNITY-CUM-PROGRESS: DISCOURSES OF THE REFORM'S RATIONALES**

### **Chapter 1. Rationales of the Reform**

In many of their promotional speeches and writings, the reform leaders insisted that the proposed reform was an indisputable necessity for Hindustani classical music. They envisioned changes such as the introduction of notation, classroom teaching, and theorization of musical knowledge. The reformers held such changes axiomatic because they assumed that the flow of history moves toward the preconceived direction of modernity—becoming more civilized, advanced, prosperous, sophisticated, and becoming a modern nation-state. The reformers reasoned that India was going to tread the path of development, as any undeveloped or less developed nation would. In reformist arguments, reform and the advancement that it brings had to happen since India was less advanced than western countries. According to the reform leaders, the question was not whether such reforms would happen or not. They would surely happen. It was a question of when they would happen. Reformers asserted that the “natural” course of history required the reform of Hindustani music, and required changes needed to happen for India to become a modern, self-respecting, and civilized society.

To reinforce their claim that reform was necessary, the reformers cite several reasons. I group them into three main categories. One was the idea that

the public appreciation of (classical) music was a must for a civilized nation. The second reason was that Hindustani music needed to be saved from deterioration and extinction. The third commonly used reason for the reform was that modern reforms were happening in other sectors of Indian society and music should follow suit.

## **1. THE REQUIREMENT OF A CIVILIZED NATION**

### **a. Complaints about Current Situations.**

As the most important goal of the reform, its leaders emphasized having the general public learn and appreciate Hindustani classical music. Talks on the subject were invariably accompanied by statements that characterized the lack of public appreciation as an anomaly, a lamentable marked condition. In the Third All-India Music Conference in 1919, an active member of the Conference, G. S. Chawan, stated as follows.

The present state of Indian Music is chaotic, and whenever we happen to think of its weakness in contrast with the vigour with which the Music of Europe is growing and spreading, we have to hang our heads down with shame. Look at the history of European Music, the way in which it has preserved itself, and look at the history of our own Music” (AIMC 1920: 122-123).

Similarly, the Maharaja of Dharampur<sup>1</sup> reportedly made the following statement in his speech in 1936.

No other country in the world ... had placed music so low, so contemptuously neglected, as this country. Nowhere in the West were the young natural instincts for rhythm, for music, for completely repressed,

---

<sup>1</sup> Dharampur was a princely state in Gujarat.

censored and banned as they happened to be in [this] county.... Music had literally become the direct Harijan<sup>2</sup> child in the “reformed” community of those whose learning was lop-sided, and whose puritanism ended with the repression of one of the noblest of gifts of art to mankind” (in Misra 1985: 11).

The two quotations above come from speeches delivered in 1919 and 1936, respectively, when the music reform movement was well under way. However this type of discourse did not start in the early twentieth century. It dates back as far as the mid-nineteenth century. Earlier music reform advocates had been airing the same grievance for decades. In 1849, writer and social reformer Gopal Hari Deshmukh (penname ‘Lokahitavadi’) wrote an essay advocating that the Indian public accept music as their European counterparts do. Deshmukh admired the music education system in German public schools. In France and England, he was impressed that reputable gentlemen were conversant in music and their wives musically skilled. He reproached Hindus for failing to appreciate classical music due to their misconception (Rosse 1995: 65-66). This article appeared in the journal *Prabhākara* in April 1849. It seems to have captured a notable amount of attention, since the summary of the article appeared a month later in another journal (Rosse 1995: 90). In the 1860s, Rajnarain Bose, a social reformer and Brahmo Samaj member, promoted the establishment of a music school by the Society for Promotion of National Feelings among Educated Youth of Bengal. In the Society’s promotional writing, Bose commented: “Every nation has its music. It is to be regretted that the majority of educated natives of

---

<sup>2</sup> Harijan is the name that Gandhi gave to outcaste communities.

India neither cultivate European nor native music” (Bose ca. 1866 quoted in Rosse 1995: 21).

For several decades before Paluskar and Bhatkhande, music reformers had been chastising the Indian public for not appreciating Hindustani classical music. As is obvious from the above examples, reformers frequently asserted the need of public appreciation of music by comparing Hindustani music’s condition with that of western classical music in countries of Western Europe (occasionally North America too). In their speeches, reformers treated it axiomatic that the general public should appreciate classical music. Yet, reformist discourses presented a few reasons why mass music appreciation was desirable. Most broadly, the argument was that it was “natural” for human beings to have music in their lives. In the already quoted example, the Maharaja of Dharampur said, “Nowhere in the West were the young natural instincts ... for music so completely repressed ... as in [this] country” (in Misra 1985: 11). The statement (with the phrase “young natural instincts”) implies that human nature includes musical ability, if unhindered. In other words, it was only “natural” that the general population should appreciate music. It was the lack of appreciation that was unnatural.

#### **b. Ideology of the Civilized Nation**

Another, more specific, reason that the reformers gave for the desirability of mass music appreciation was the importance of classical music for the nation as a whole. A succinct summary of the reasoning appears in the proposal for

establishing a National Academy of Music, submitted at the second All-India Music Conference in 1918. The proposal begins with the following:

The importance of Music in the evolution of a nation cannot be over-estimated. For Music, like other fine arts, as an index of National culture, marks the stage of civilization which a country exhibits (AIMC 1919, Appendix D).

Music was important to the nation because it indexed the nation's stage of civilization. The ideology of civilization, especially the idea of *stages* of civilization, requires a few assumptions about relationships between a nation and its music.

The most basic assumption is that a nation has its own "national music," distinct from any other country's in the world, and that the music expresses characters of the nation. The Nawab of Rampur,<sup>3</sup> who was a classical music aficionado and employed top-ranking musicians of the time, offered a keynote speech at the opening of the Second All-India Music Conference in 1918. His speech contained a typical statement

Every nation has its own music, which expresses the soul of the nation and denotes all the national culture, its characteristics and the peculiarities of its refinement. Indian music is essentially spiritual and ethical... (AIMC 1919: 5).

This idea that music expresses and reflects the society's characters was so prevalent that the statement appears several times in each Report of the early All-India Music Conferences. This idea provided reformers the main argument why the music reform should happen and why Hindustani classical music should be appreciated and supported nationwide. The organizers of the first All-India

---

<sup>3</sup> A princely state that existed in the region now called Uttar Pradesh (North-central India).

Music Conference distributed invitation pamphlets to potential attendees. In the pamphlet, the Secretary of the Conference, S. L. Joshi, portrayed music as “a potent instrument in expressing the Soul of a Nation.” Following this lead, the President of the Conference, Nawab Ali Khan of Akbarpur,<sup>4</sup> picked up the theme of “expressing the nation’s soul” in his opening speech (AIMC 1918: 10). Thus the idea that music expresses the nations’ character was one of the most prominent arguments that the reformist discourses used, repeated many times by various speakers and writers.

Similar statements occurred throughout the early All-India Music Conferences, the same idea repeated or alluded by many different speakers. Reading the *Report of the Second All-India Music Conference* offers a glimpse. The introduction to the *Report* summarizes aims of the Conferences and congratulates efforts so far made. The author—Joint Secretary of the Conference—underscored the magnitude of music’s value for a nation’s well-being. He praised promoters of music education, such as the Conferences’ participants, as nation builders (AIMC 1919: i-iii). This Conference in 1918 opened with a welcome address by the Chairman of the Reception Committee, who dwelt on the theme of valuable contributions that music can make for the development of national culture. Then the President of the Conference, the ruler of Rampur, took the podium to state that music has a national significance because music “expresses the soul of the nation and denotes ... the national culture.” Bhatkhande spoke next and read the resolution of establishing a

---

<sup>4</sup> A small princely state that existed in the region now called Uttar Pradesh (North-central India).

National Academy of Music. In his address, he called the music reform's aim "a matter of such national importance" and declared that the "whole nation must take up the cause" (AIMC 1919: 5, 9). The written proposal for the National Academy of Music started by stressing the importance of music for a nation because, again, music is an index of national culture and indicates the stage of the development of its civilization (AIMC 1919, Appendix D). The *Report* includes an appeal for supporting the Third All-India Music Conference that was planned for the following year. In the appeal, the General Secretary of the proposed conference likened music to "the heart" of national life, while calling science "the head" and industries the "limbs" of a nation (ibid.: Appendix C). Thus, the idea that music "reflects" the nation or "expresses" the nation's soul surfaced many times during the course of the conference and its report. As the degree of reiteration indicates, the argument was a central idea that reformers deployed to rationalize their movement.

Reformers used a few different formulations of the same basic idea about music-nation relationships. The most prevalent was the idea that music expresses the nation's soul. Second was its stronger formulation, which maintained that music and nation were linked by an iconic relationship—that is, they had the same characteristics. The Third All-India Music Conference in 1919 opened with a statement of the iconicity of music and nation. The Secretary of the Third Conference, Sitaram Sah reportedly said:

So intimately connected is music with the human soul that the character of a nation can be recognised by the quality of its music, and music devotional, sensual and warlike, each in turn, plays its part in building up the character of a nation (AIMC 1920: 1).

Here, music did not only “express” a nation’s character, but it had the same character as the nation. The relationship was more direct and intimate. Similarly, the Nawab of Rampur, one of the most important patrons at the time, likewise commented that music “denotes all the national culture, its characteristics and the peculiarities of its refinement” (AIMC 1919: 5).

To support the idea that music stood for the nation’s stage of civilization, reformers assumed that (1) a nation had its own (national) music and that (2) this music expressed or even duplicated the nation’s characters. Those assumptions were static in nature, however, and the reformers needed a non-static assumption to justify the reform movement, which inevitably involved change. If a nation was not only to exist but also progress and develop (which it must, reformers implied), music had to progress as well. In his opening speech at the Third All-India Music Conference in 1919, the President of the Reception Committee, Raja Moti Chand, stated as follows.

No community<sup>5</sup> can be alive and prosper without the development of its own culture, literature, and music. Music, art, and poetry support the culture and life of a community. They are the heart, mind, and countenance of our community life’s body (AIMC 1920: 81).

The General Secretary of the Conference, Shivendra Basu echoed the Raja’s opinion and stressed the value of gatherings such as the All-India Music Conferences. They were crucial for the nation because the “furtherance” of music constituted “a vital element in the well-being of the country” (AIMC 1920: 8).

---

<sup>5</sup> Raja Moti Chand used the word “*kaum*,” which usually translates as “community.” This word later came to refer to religious communities, especially Hindus and Muslims. The expression “communal strife” is understood as violence between Hindu and Muslim mobs. I doubt this term was immediately associated with religious communities in 1919. I do not think Raja Moti Chand meant Hindu community in his speech, though I cannot completely deny the possibility.

These statements added historical direction to the notion of iconicity between a nation and its music. If a society was to develop and prosper, its music too needed to develop and prosper. For the nation to achieve its “well-being,” its music too had to attain a good condition. If the nation was to progress along stages of civilization, the music—or the condition of music—ought to progress too.

In reformist discourses, to progress and prosper meant a number of things. In general terms, the society had to bestow importance to Hindustani classical music and uphold it in a position of respect. More specifically, by musical “progress” reformers meant that (1) the music should enjoy ample patronage—by the general populace as well as by the government. “Progress” also required that (2) the music be part of social life, and the general public know and appreciate the music. S. K. Joshi expressed this view in 1919.

It is well known that in Europe and America, music is regarded as an essential part of national education and occupies an important place in the religious, social, and household life of the people. ... [T]his was equally true of India in her better days...” (AIMC 1920: 116).

Moreover, musical progress also entailed giving attention to the music scientifically. (3) To be of true importance, Hindustani classical music must have a developed music scholarship, with scientific theory. Similarly, (4) one had to preserve the music’s historical records and maintain the knowledge of music history. Finally, for musical “progress,” reformist discourses dictated that (5) there would be organized institutions to preserve and propagate musical knowledge—such as schools, libraries, and museums (especially schools). Music schools stood for “progress in modern times” (Ratanjankar 1992: 2). In the

passage below by Pradyot Coomar Tagore, the existence of “academies and institutions” signaled that the music was advancing and flourishing.

We may still ... live in hope for the day when musical Academies and Institutions will be established in India, as they have been in Europe, with State aid, without which no art or literature has flourished or can flourish in any country (Tagore, P. C. 1926: 66).

The above elements of musical progress were at the same time reform objectives. Since the condition of music corresponded to the nation’s level of development, reformers argued, the reform movement was indispensable for the Indian nation to progress and move further along the stages of civilization.

In sum, the first rationale with which the reformers validated their movement derived from the ideology of civilized nation. The reform objectives such as the mass appreciation of Hindustani classical music and the establishment of music institutions factored in India’s becoming a civilized nation. “Civilization and culture would not be deserving of their name without [music],” proclaimed the General Secretary of the Third All-India Music Conference (AIMC 1920: 8). Discussed during the time of active nationalist movements (political and social) in the early twentieth century, the notion of civilized nation was the most prominent rationale that the music reformers used to justify their movement.

### **Colonial Romantics’ Versions**

The idea that music expressed a nation’s character, and the stronger version of the idea that a nation and its music were in an iconic relationship,

belonged to European Romanticism. Prevalent in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Romantic ideas had penetrated all fields (and in many countries). In history, Romantics considered history as “an organic expression of a society’s character” (Metcalf 1997: 26). Western Indophiles presumed that appreciating Indian classical music amounted to engendering sympathy for the country (e.g., Rosenthal 1993: vii). Philosophically, Romanticism arose in resistance to rationalism, and strictly speaking Romantic ideas did not concur with the ideologies of progress and modernization (Berman 1992). Hindustani music reformers seldom maintained such philosophical purity, however, as evident in their combining ideas of Romanticism (music expresses the nation’s character) with the ideologies of progress and rationalism (stages of civilization, scientific approach)—with no sense of conflict. Many European sympathizers had comparable, philosophically eclectic stances as regards reforming Hindustani classical music.

Nonetheless, some European sympathizers (though a minority among them) maintained a philosophically stricter idea about music’s being the embodiment of the nation’s cultural characteristics. A 1913 speech by Claude Hill—a member of the Governor’s Executive Counsel in Bombay—provides an example. Reform leaders frequently invited high government officials to deliver speeches in ceremonies at the reformist schools. Generally, those officials were fond of music and sympathetic to Indian culture. At the 1913 prize distribution ceremony at the Gandharva Mahavidyalaya in Mumbai, Claude H. Hill from the

Governor's office addressed the state of Indian music theory. He compared Indian and European music theories.

I understand the theory underlying [Indian] music to have been that each individual ... [has] an individual tone, if he can ... manage to express it, which can be made the medium of communication between himself and nature and the godhead. From the point of view of the science of musical harmony as understood in the west, such a theory is perhaps unscientific; but it is at least a very beautiful one, and accounts perhaps for the two factors, which make Indian music such a complex affair—its infinite number of ... hair-breadth notes and the impossibility of reducing them to a concrete record. I suggested [elsewhere] that the musical theories of east and west reflected ... on the one hand in the east, the beauties of the philosophies which embrace all of nature in the universe, and, in the west, the more practical and scientific mentality of the people (Hill in GM Bombay 1913: 8).

In the above speech, not only music but also music theory became an organic expression of the Indian civilization. The music theory of India was beautiful, complex, and philosophical, but not scientific and not practicable for reducing to concrete record. Hill's statement immediately evokes the orientalist characterization of India, which many historians and sociologists of India critiqued as being accessory to the discursive assertion of colonial power (e.g., Inden 1990, Prakash 1992, Breckenridge and van der Veer 1993, Kobayashi 1995, Said 1978). Indian music was otherworldly and not practical, philosophical and not scientific. Indian music was closer to nature, universe, and god, as Indians have not lost these primordial connections, which modern Europeans have lost. All of the assumptions present in Hill's speech participated in the orientalist discourse that delineated India as the counter-ego of modern Europe. Hill's speech was an example of both orientalist and Romantic discourses. Later in the speech, Hill cautioned against a hasty adoption of a notation system. The

excellence in Indian music, he argued, did not have any “scientific basis.” Yet, nothing was more beautiful than the idea that music enabled communication between the soul of man and the soul of nature.

The claim of superiority [of Indian music] lies in this, its philosophic aspect; and it would be a calamity if—through a keen desire to reduce it to scientific expression—this aspect of it were obscured (GM Bombay 1913: 10).

In other words, a scientific method or apparatus such as notation was unsuited to Hindustani classical music, whose nature was non-scientific. Hill’s idea about “Indian music” was more Romantic than the reformers’ because he was not concerned with “stages of civilization.” What mattered to him was an unchanging essence of the civilization, not its progress and development, which do not accord with Romanticism in principle. According to Hill, even rationality was a cultural trait of Europeans and not a universal truth to be taught to the others—despite the contemporary colonial ideology of “tutoring” or “parenting” the colonized. His view accepted difference and did not impose the Eurocentric notion of progress, but it simultaneously reified India and Hindustani classical music, proscribed change, and kept this music of the “other” in its place.

Another colonial sympathizer of the reform, Governor George Clarke, endorsed the other end of the reformist discourse about music-nation relationships. For Clarke, music was not so much an expression of the (unchanging) essence of a nation than an index of a society’s progress toward nationhood. In 1911,<sup>6</sup> Governor Clarke delivered a speech at the Gandharva

---

<sup>6</sup> The *Times of India* reported the speech of Governor Clarke on January 4, 1911. The speech took place at the occasion of a prize giving ceremony. Considering that such ceremonies in other

Mahavidyalaya in Mumbai. He presented cases of European music history as precedents, whose path Indian music should follow with the aid of the reform movement.

The music of the West has ... followed lines of evolution which have no counterpart in India. ... It has become a highly organized pursuit with vast numbers of societies actively engaged in extending the scope of its influence. Its professors are held in high honour, and it offers some great prizes to its votaries. It is no longer the pastime of the few, but has become almost a necessity to the many who demand and find increasing enjoyment in it. The music of the Western peoples has thus followed their social and political development, becoming an organized force as they become organized nations in the full sense of the word ("Ganranjan" 1994a: 17).

In Clarke's opinion, a society had to be socially and politically well organized to qualify as a real nation ("in the full sense of the word"). Likewise, it was also a prerequisite for nationhood that the society's music culture be well organized. Here Governor Clarke agreed with the reformers that the condition of music indexed the degree of advancement of the society as a whole. However, his opinion differed from the reformers' because he put India's nationhood at stake, while the reformers assumed its existence. In other words, Clarke's idea of music-nation correlation measured not how civilized a nation was (as reformers argued) but whether or not Indian society should be recognized as a real nation. In another part of the same speech, the Governor directly addressed India's nationhood.

Such a movement [that would vastly increase the number of people who understand music] may well arise if India progresses towards real

---

years were held in December at the Gandharva Mahavidyalaya Mumbai, Governor Clarke's speech could have been delivered in December 1910.

nationhood ... and it would be alike the proof of and a helping cause towards that nationhood (“Ganranjan” 1994b: 24).

In Clarke’s speech, nationhood was so intimately tied to having all sectors of the society organized that the reform movement was at the same time the result of progress that India made to date toward nationhood, and a contribution toward India’s further progress toward nationhood. Governor Clarke’s speech was nuanced with the contemporary ideology of colonial guardianship: the British Raj watching and nurturing India to grow into a real nation and a nation-state.

We do not know how reform leaders perceived speeches such as Hill’s or Clarke’s. It seems, however, that these speeches were generally considered to support the reform movement. Vishnu Digambar Paluskar published Hill’s speech in its entirety from the Gandharva Mahavidyalaya Press. Similarly, Clarke’s speech was immediately reproduced in *Times of India*, Mumbai edition. It thus seems that Paluskar and the journalist wanted the colonial sympathizers’ speeches to have some impact, although the speeches contained implications derogatory to India. The speeches may have had assumptions that conflicted with those of the reformers. For instance, Governor Clarke implied that India’s nationhood was on the making, while the country’s nationhood was a given for the reformers. Regardless, the reformers did not hesitate to employ colonial discourses when they seemed to legitimize reformist efforts.

## **2. SALVAGE FROM DETERIORATION**

### **a. Abominable Condition and the Possibility of Extinction**

The second factor that reformers drew on to justify their reform effort was that Hindustani music needed salvaging. They asserted that Hindustani classical music was in a degenerate condition and that they needed to act swiftly to save the music. The early All-India Music Conferences were filled with speeches that referred to the “current decay” of Hindustani classical music. In his capacity as the President of the Conference, Nawab Ali Khan of Akbarpur proclaimed the following at the First All-India Music Conference in 1916.

No one will deny that the Music of the country is at present in the hands of an ignorant and illiterate class and that it is essential to rescue it from the possibility of complete destruction and place it on a scientific basis (AIMC 1918: 10).

In a similar vein, the Nawab of Rampur stated during the Second All-India Music Conference in Delhi (1918) in his presidential address: “I should like to see our music elevated from its present degraded conditions and earnestly taken up by the educated classes as in the Western countries” (AIMC 1919: 7).

The idea of degeneration was most frequently voiced in comparison with “past glory” or “golden age” of classical music in India (presumed to be during the first millennia or during the reign of the Mughal Emperor Akbar in the 16<sup>th</sup> century). Atiya Begum Fyzee Rahamin, one of the most prominent patrons of Hindustani classical music then, addressed the audience at the First All-India Music Conference on the issue of degeneration. She bemoaned “the present degenerate condition of music” and contrasted it with the music’s “former glory”

(AIMC 1918: 24). In a similar vein, G. S. Chawan, another active participant of the All-India Music Conferences, asserted that both practice and theory of Hindustani classical music were vanishing. At the Third All-India Music Conference, he stressed that the “science of music” was in a dire condition. Similarly, in his opinion, the practice of music faced the danger of disintegration too. In his words, “Indian Art of Music has already evaporated like the fragrance of a flower.” He insisted that preserving presently available knowledge of musical performance was the first priority in saving Hindustani music.

Our art is fading away, and if we do not make timely efforts the hand of death will soon take away the few worthy veterans of the Art that are still among us (AIMC 1920: 122-129).

He proposed the establishment of a Society for the Preservation of Indian Music, which would pay professional musicians to teach students chosen by the Society.

As seen in Chawan’s comment above, stronger versions of the notion of “debased present” extended the logic of decline into the future and predicted a possible extinction of Hindustani classical music. Bhatkhande was one of those reformers who warned about the music’s possible extinction. He concluded his speech at the Second All-India Music Conference with the following statement.

If we wait another decade, the probability is that the best available artists will disappear, and we shall be thrown on the mercy of people who are considerably their inferiors (AIMC 1919: 39).<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> While the early twentieth century reformers invariably depicted their contemporary Hindustani music scenes to be at the rock bottom of degeneration, such representation is absent from other sources that concern the same period. Biographies of musicians who were contemporaries of the reform but did not belong to the movement do not contain references of “decline” or “degeneration”—biographies of both hereditary and non-hereditary musicians. Those biographies do, however, include accounts of secrecy about musical knowledge, refusal to teach, and the hiding of stylistic elements. But such accounts are not depicted as elements constituting the “decline” of Hindustani music in general. Rather, secretcies and refusals are annoyances or

Those who wrote about the reform movement later in the twentieth century continued to uphold the reformers' opinion on the matter of deterioration. Those writers reiterated that the period before the movement—that is, late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries—was the time of utmost degeneration for Hindustani music culture. According to them, Hindustani music scenes then abounded in “vices, dogmatism, and vulgarity” (Nayar 1989: *passim*). Therefore, “music was considered [by the general public] as an occupation fit only for the idlers and good-for-nothing, an occupation pursued by the illiterate” (Ratanjankar 1967: 2-3).

#### **b. Holding Hereditary Musicians Responsible**

The reformist descriptions of the “degenerate state of music” were typically accompanied by mentions of undesirable qualities of professional musicians (or musicians' class). A closer look at the above examples of “degeneration” discourse demonstrates the point. Nawab Ali Khan stated that the music was “in the hands of an ignorant and illiterate class” and reformers needed to rescue the music from “the possibility of complete destruction” (AIMC 1918: 10). His utterance clearly tied hereditary musicians to the “destruction” of Hindustani classical music and even implied a cause and effect relationship between them. Likewise, when Atiya Begum Fyzee Rahamin discussed the “degenerate condition” of music at the All-India Music Conference, she plainly reproached hereditary musicians—“the present class of artist-instructors” in her

---

obstacles that the musicians overcame by seeking other teachers or by persevering on their own to gain the hidden knowledge (Pandit 1996, Paintal 1996, Khokar 1996).

words. According to her, those musicians' inadequacies caused "the total failure" to transmit musical knowledge. With such failure, degeneration was inevitable (AIMC 1918: 24). In both Nawab Ali Khan's and Atiya Begum's speeches, the decayed state was directly associated with the contemporary professional musicians' "class"—portrayed to be "ignorant and illiterate" or having a number of "shortcomings." Bhatkhande—who considered theory and history equally, if not more, important as performance—proclaimed that professional musicians' "illiteracy" halted the development of Hindustani classical music.

Hundreds of old Ragas, ... though fully described in the Shastras, have remained till now a dead letter, owing to the illiteracy of our experts and the apathy of our educated classes (AIMC 1919: 39).

In Bhatkhande's opinion, the knowledge of the music's historical development was crucial for its further development. He consistently voiced the opinion that "professional artists [were] hopelessly illiterate and ignorant ... and narrow-minded ..." (Bhatkhande 1974: 2-3 & *passim*).

Among numerous examples of this reasoning (i.e., that the current class of musicians was responsible for the "degenerate" state), some are about refusal to teach ("narrow-minded"), some are about the lack of education or knowledge about the written theoretical tradition of Hindustani music ("ignorant and illiterate"), and still some are about moral conduct. For instance, Prodyot Coomar Tagore considers that the contemporary decline is due to the "want of morals" among musicians of both sexes (Tagore, P.C. 1926: 58). At the Third All-India Music Conference in 1919, the Raja of Gauripur spoke about what he called "great crisis through which the music-world recently passed."

[T]he blessed Beena of ... Mother Sree Sarada was gracing the hands of so-called music-masters ([*Kalawants*]) and the false fair ones of the town [i.e., courtesans]. Many a righteous and innocent heart felt the greatest pang to see the hideous amalgam of sweet song and Satanic hideousness. The rippling waves of Tabla and ... the maddening glass, the cadence of music ... with ... the fumes of hashish—then to cap all—sensuality most abhorred and abominable; all these seemed to be strung in the same string. ... [M]usic, the most cherished joy of the immortals, being under the thrall of blackguardism, came to be altogether a thing banished from gentle society (AIMC 1920: 131).

Thus the “class of musicians” was categorically held culpable for a number of faults: secrecy (“narrow-minded”), the lack of general education (“illiterate”), the lack of knowledge about the theoretical tradition of Shastra and its language Sanskrit (“ignorant and illiterate”), and disagreeable life styles and performance styles (“sensuality most abhorred” and “blackguardism”). Commonly, reformers attributed the “vulgar” manners of performance to professional musicians’ eagerness for monetary remuneration. In reformers’ estimation, professional musicians gave priority to pleasing their wealthy patrons and extracting more monetary or material rewards. That is, reformist discourses additionally faulted the professional musicians for being too materialistic.

Concerning sensuality and vulgarity that the reformers did not approve, the strongest criticism went to courtesan performers and their (male) entourages. The reformers interpreted their very presence to be a factor of the music’s decline. Moreover, their ill reputation caused the gentle public to avoid Hindustani classical music, making the music’s condition degenerate further. In foregrounding courtesans as a reason for Hindustani classical music’s decay, reformers such as Tagore took part in contemporary British colonial discourse, in

which “dancing girls” or “prostitutes” embodied the degeneration of the Indian civilization (Metcalf 1997: 102-104). As the issue of prostitutes prompted the British government to produce regulations of control, the idea of decay, often represented by the courtesans, generated urgency among the music reformers to take steps to save and ameliorate Hindustani classical music. In reformist discourses, hereditary musicians and courtesan performers represented the decay, which constituted a reason why the reform should take place.<sup>8</sup>

To recapitulate, reformist discourses presented the necessity of the reform largely in two manners. The first was a justification based on the idea of civilized nation. The mass appreciation of Hindustani classical music was necessary because that was the norm of a civilized society, and the reform movement vowed to make that happen. The second justification pertained to the notions of degeneration and salvation; Hindustani classical music culture was corrupt and needed to be saved. Reformers labeled the intended rescue process the “revival” or “revitalization” of Hindustani classical music, and the reform movement was to carry it out. Reform leaders proposed a number of solutions for the projects to civilize and to revitalize. They consisted of the establishment of music schools, the publication of books and magazines, and the promotion of research work and

---

<sup>8</sup> To qualify again, not all writers subscribe to the negative portrayal of hereditary musicians. Musicians from hereditary families or those who personally studied with hereditary masters usually do not describe professional musicians categorically as “lower class,” “narrow-minded,” “illiterate and ignorant,” or “immoral.” Literature not concerned with the reform movement may give a different impression of the early-twentieth-century Hindustani music culture (e.g., biographies of non-reformist musicians of the period). Nonetheless, literature about the reform movement or the leaders largely reiterates the reformist ideology and portrays the turn of the century as a time of extreme predicament (e.g., Nayar 1989, Ratanjankar 1967, Athavale 1967, etc.). It is useful for reform followers to replicate the portrayal because the reform’s importance in music history increases if the preceding period was degenerate.

historical record keeping. In reformist discourses, the lack of mass appreciation and the lack of academic works were factors of Hindustani music's decay. Therefore, the existence of schools and the presence of academic study themselves constituted revitalizing forces. For mass propagation and revitalization of the music, the establishment of music schools was probably the most important among the solutions. Schools offered a new venue to learn the music, more accessible and more respectable than traditional venues involving hereditary musicians (at least in the reformers' opinion). In addition, the structured nature of a school would prevent the problem of secrecy, of teachers withholding musical knowledge from students. Apart from schools, reform leaders maintained that the publication of textbooks and journals should also instigate public interest in the music and remedy the problem of scant access to musical knowledge. Concomitant with and equally important as mass dissemination was the idea of respectability. In reformist arguments, schools, publications, and academic studies were all vital factors for Hindustani classical music's having social respect. Schools would attract people from respectable families to the music, thereby making the music socially respectable. Publications and academic studies were measures of esteem that the music received in society, because only when people paid serious attentions to music would such publications and academic studies emerge. Together with the issues of access and social esteem, two themes ran across the proposed solutions: science and uplift. The notion of science was of particular importance in reformist discourses. Schools were to impart scientific teaching of the music;

likewise, textbooks and academic studies would convey and develop scientific approaches. The following chapters explore the ideas of science and uplift as they appeared in reformist discourses.

## Chapter 2. Scientism

### 1. DISCOURSES OF THE SCIENTIFIC

I have discussed that the reformers made a case for their effort by arguing that Indian society needed to reform its classical music in order to become a truly civilized nation and also to protect the music from further damage and loss. Another reason that the reformers gave to justify the reform was to develop scientific approaches in Hindustani music culture. Scientific approach, in reformers' arguments, constituted part of the requirements of a civilized nation. Yet, being "scientific" also had an independent value. Reformist discourses often utilized the notion of science as an ideal that should be followed for its own sake.

From the very first trace of efforts to reform Hindustani music, being "scientific" was a desirable feature. Sourindro Mohun Tagore publicized his Bengal Music School (est. 1871) as being dedicated to "the teaching of Hindu music on *scientific* principles" (Rosse 1995: 30). A disciple of Maula Baksh, G. G. Barve, opened his own music school in 1909 and called it (in English) School of *Scientific* Music (Rosse 1995: 147). Reformist discourses indeed included a profusion of the term "scientific."

The early All-India Music Conferences invariably included "science" as part of the Conference's aims. The First All-India Music Conference purported to unify efforts made in various parts of the country "to give music a *scientific* basis" (AIMC 1920: 156). At the opening of the First Conference in 1916, its

General Secretary S. L. Joshi, spoke of aims and objectives of the Conference. He stated that Maharaja Sayaji Rao Gaekwar, the host and sponsor of the conference, had long held a keen interest in the main purpose of the Conference: “systematizing Indian Music and placing it on a *scientific* basis” (AIMC 1918: 4). At the end of this first conference, its leaders agreed that the Conference also aimed to promote new raga productions “on *scientific and systematic* lines,” to improve musical instruments with the “knowledge of modern *science*,” and to “examine and fix the microtones of shruties ... with the help of our *scientific* instruments” (AIMC 1919: 61-62). As the public education of music was one of the main goals of the reform, reformers frequently linked the scientific with teaching. The General Secretary of the First All-India Music Conference, S. L. Joshi, expressed his optimism that “*scientific* teaching of music” in schools would rapidly develop, given the efforts of conferences like the one he was attending as well as the favorable attitude of the incumbent British Governor (AIMC 1918: 4). The second through fourth All-India Music Conferences were concerned with establishing a national academy of music. The conference leaders envisioned the academy as an institution that enabled “cultivating music as an art based on *science*” (AIMC 1920: 117). In sum, any scientific feature was desirable in the reformist discourses.

Hindustani music reform was by no means the only sphere in which the notion of science took a leading role. In India and elsewhere, the notion of “science” had entered all academic disciplines and, concurrently, much of public intellectual discourse already in the nineteenth century. While the music

reformers declared to establish music education systems along “scientific lines,” in many other sectors of the society appeared efforts and manifestos to improve the society along “scientific lines.” David Ludden discusses the Congress governments’ efforts to do so in agriculture during the British colonial and post-independent periods. The “Congress manifesto of 1945 declared: ‘Agriculture has to be improved on scientific lines’” (Ludden 1992: 272-273). Whether in musicology, agriculture, sociology, or education, an eagerness for a “scientific system” of knowledge prevailed in the late nineteenth to early twentieth century. Metcalf sees this tendency most pronounced among Victorians. In India and elsewhere, Victorians “sought rational principles that would provide a comprehensive, and comprehensible, way of fitting everything they saw in the world around them into ordered hierarchies” (Metcalf 1997: 67). Hindustani music reform movement was no exception. Some music reformers clearly exhibited their penchant for a scientific system, which had an ordered hierarchy and in which everything had its place. They claimed that all ragas and talas could be organized in this manner.

## **2. THE IDEOLOGY OF SCIENCE**

In the environment in which all disciplines sought to be scientific and build a scientific system of knowledge, being scientific was not only desirable but also imperative. It was normative to be scientific, at least discursively, and knowledge had to be “scientific” to command any serious public attention. Reformers’ speeches reflect their awareness that “the scientific” was the norm. In

1919, Sitaram Sah expressed appreciation for the reform leaders' achievements to date. He talked of science as a necessary path.

It was obvious from the trend of modern thought and taste that if we want our Indian music to take its proper place in the musical world of today, we must ... engraft on our ancient system the *scientific* method of the West (AIMC 1920: 4).

The speaker, S. Sah envisioned Hindustani music's modernity and the world's recognition of it to be "obviously" tied to adopting a scientific method. For Sah, as for many others, science was the norm and requirement of the modern times in which they lived.

Apart from being normative in intellectual discourses, the claim of being scientific had several implications. Reformers closely linked the idea of science with improvement. The President of the First All-India Music Conference described the Conference's host, Maharaja Sayaji Rao Gaekwar, as a person keenly interested in "systematizing Indian Music and placing it on a scientific basis with a view to improving it" (AIMC 1918: 4). The same conference publicized its resolution that the All-India Music Conference would undertake the task of improving musical instruments with the "knowledge of modern science" (AIMC 1919: 61). In both of these statements, science is the medium of improvement.

Reformist discourses associated science with esteem too—esteem that Hindustani music would receive in society. In his lecture at the Third All-India Music Conference, S. K. Joshi talked of the ancient times in India, when the Indian civilization had not yet begun to decline.

The *high esteem* in which music was held in India is proved by [the surviving musical literature], which show that great minds applied themselves to the cultivation of music not only as an Art but also as a *Science* (AIMC 1920: 116).

In the above statement, Joshi portrayed cultivating the “science of music” (reformers’ preferred term) to be the chief reason for the music’s enjoying a high social regard. “Science” was the source of respect. However, the science = esteem equation had a third, additional factor. Joshi’s comment above mentioned intelligentsia (“great minds”) as science’s agents, who embodied social prestige. This third factor, intelligentsia, was present—implicitly or explicitly—when reformist discourses referred to science and esteem. Reformers discursively linked science, respect, and intellectual class.

Many reformers claimed that Hindustani classical music failed to attract educated classes because it lacked scientific approaches. Hence they expected that scientific approaches would attract educated learners to the music. Prominent figures who held this view include Bhatkhande and B. V. Keskar. Keskar was a follower/sympathizer of Bhatkhande and colleague of Ratanjankar—Bhatkhande’s disciple and Principal of the prime reformist school, Marris College of Hindustani Music. Keskar became the Minister of Information and Broadcasting in newly independent India. Keskar wrote the following in his tribute to Ratanjankar.

Because of the want of ... knowledge of theory and history and also [because of] an absence of general culture amongst performing musicians, music has suffered a double draw-back. Its stature in society has been lowered to an inferior position than other arts, and the necessity of music as a part of general culture in society has not been able to impress the educated classes (Keskar 1993 [1961]: 293-4).

Along with traditional musicians, Keskar impugned the lack of scientific approaches (“knowledge of theory and history”) for Hindustani music’s low social regard as well as its inability to appeal to the educated population. In this example too, the ideas of science, social respect, and the educated segment of society are discursively connected in a single circle of cause and effect.

At the Second All-India Music Conference, Bhatkhande explicated the plan of establishing a national academy of music, as the Conference passed a resolution to move forward with the plan. His speech revealed a vision of the academy as an institution for the educated. In fact, Bhatkhande envisaged the entire reform movement to be centered on the “educated classes” (at least discursively).

... the problem of reviving, uplifting, and protecting Hindustani music [is] after all not so difficult to solve, given the necessary sympathy and cooperation of the *educated classes*. ... The best way to begin the work of regeneration is to recognise the present Hindustani practice of music, and to establish the same on a *scientific* and sound basis, that is to support it by a good, well-reasoned and easily intelligible theory. Theory is rightly described as the backbone of practice, and when that perishes, the practice gradually begins to degenerate. This means that the time has now arrived when the *educated classes* should take up the subject in hand earnestly and proceed to give it its *due position and importance* (AIMC 1919: 10).

This segment of the speech postulates a link between the scientific, the educated, and the esteemed. Bhatkhande argued that cooperation of the “educated classes” would make reform tasks possible—the tasks of grasping current musical practices and establishing scientific theories of them. After stating that theory has the primary importance in a music culture, Bhatkhande indicated again and more explicitly that theorization was a work of the educated classes. In the last

sentence he stated, “This means that the time has now arrived when the *educated classes* should take up the subject” of Hindustani classical music. In the speech, “theory” (“science of music”) directly led to the “educated classes,” because Bhatkhande invited the educated to participate in the reform’s primary task of theorization, betraying an assumption that only the educated were capable of scientific tasks. The passage’s final message reads that the educated classes’ involvement in Hindustani music would gain social respect (“due position and importance”) for the music. This example too elucidates the discursive pattern that bound together the ideas of science, esteem, and intelligentsia (or educated strata of society).

Besides exemplifying the science-esteem-intelligentsia trinity, the above passage of Bhatkhande’s 1918 speech expressed another view on the “science of music.” He held the opinion that theory was the basis of music practices. This particular opinion did not become as widely accepted as his other ideas among the music reformers.<sup>9</sup> Nonetheless, he repeatedly and insistently stated in public that theory/science was the foundation of practice. At the First All-India Music Conferences (1916), Bhatkhande conveyed this view in his lecture on the history of Hindustani classical music. Speaking of the Mughal era, he recognized that Hindustani classical music developed in its performance practice. However, he cautioned the audience to distinguish between the “art” and “science” of music.

---

<sup>9</sup> Not all agreed with Bhatkhande’s view of the “science of music.” For instance, the active participant of the All-India Music Conferences G. S. Chawan claimed that it was more urgent to preserve contemporary performance practices than to undertake any research. He said in opposition to Bhatkhande, “it is a truth beyond dispute that Art precedes and creates Science” (AIMC 1920: 124). Several musicians disliked the overtly academic atmosphere of the First All-India Music Conference. They included reformers such as Paluskar, who was normally interested in music theory but disagreed with the theory-over-practice attitude.

I shall ask you, however, to distinguish between the cultivation of the Art and cultivation of the study of the Science on which the Art is based.

A little later he continued:

Theory is the real backbone of practice, and when theory perishes the practice, though it may continue to live on, it bounded ultimately to drift away and run into disorder and confusion (Bhatkhande 1985: 17).

In his opinion, that was exactly what happened to Hindustani music in the Mughal and post-Mughal periods. It was because the “science” was neglected that the entire art of Hindustani music, which was founded on the science, degenerated. Conversely, according to Bhatkhande, promoting the “science” of music would be a path to save Hindustani classical music. The reform movement, therefore, should encourage the science of music and scientific approaches to music.

In intellectual discourses of the early twentieth century, the idea of science provided the measure of valid knowledge. Academic disciplines claimed to be scientific; they were indeed expected to be scientific if they were to be recognized to be academic disciplines producing real knowledge. In such an environment, declaring to be scientific amounted to claiming to possess true knowledge. By the same token, Bhatkhande declared the “science of music” to be true knowledge, more fundamental and more important (at least discursively) than the “art of music,” in which hereditary musicians prevailed. Many other reformers were more moderate than Bhatkhande and considered the “art of music” equally or more essential. Yet, they too promoted “scientific approaches,” deeming these to be the true methods, truer than methods that traditional hereditary musicians employed. The reformist discourses of science (scientific teaching, scientific approaches, or the “science of music”) clearly constituted an assertion of power,

mostly in relation to hereditary musicians. The reformers' claim of possessing "scientific knowledge" translated as a demand of authority in Hindustani music culture, because science was the paradigm of intellectual discourse of the time.

The reformers were well aware of the power of "scientific knowledge." Bhatkhande uttered this awareness most articulately in the oft-quoted incident(s), in which he answered why he had written his books in Marathi, his mother tongue. The incident took place in 1932 or 1933. In the most detailed version of the episode, a visitor was trying to persuade Bhatkhande to write his books in English instead of Marathi. Upon receiving rejection, the visitor implored Bhatkhande to publish his books at least in Hindi or Urdu, which are languages much more widely understood in the country than Marathi. Bhatkhande responded to this request in the following manner (Deodhar 1993: 48).

Firstly, Hindus have virtually lost this art; it is entirely in Muslim hands. Although at one time it was purely Hindu inheritance, no Hindu can aspire to acquire it unless he prepared to demean himself before his Muslim masters and do everything he is asked to do. All that remains with us today is the science. I have written my books in Marathi in the hope that the science at least remains with us, if not the art. Hindus ... should be able to quote what is written to the Muslim performers—the one thing that will hold them in check. Hindus will be honored at least as Pandits, if not as great performing artists! (Deodhar 1993: 48).

In this statement, science is a medium that empowers Hindus vis-à-vis Muslims masters/performers.<sup>10</sup> In another similar incident (or another account of the same

---

<sup>10</sup> It is strange that Bhatkhande's reply referred to the categories of Hindu and Muslim, while the question was concerned with the categories of Marathi and Hindi/Urdu. These language categories would logically refer to regional differences, not religious differences (and regions seldom correspond to religions). Deodhar could have misreported this incident, or Bhatkhande (despite being Mr. Logic) could have replied illogically. In either case, the connection of science and power remains the same.

incident), Bhatkhande defended writing his books in Marathi on the basis of empowering Maharashtrians: “The art has already been lost by Maharashtrians. At least the science should now be in their hands” (Deshpande 1989: 156). In this statement, science was to endow its authority to Maharashtrians, most likely in opposition to northerners—especially Hindi/Urdu speakers, whose region was the historical center of Hindustani classical music. An identical or almost identical episode appears in most of Bhatkhande’s biographies (e.g., Athavale 1967, Misra 1981). In all these reports, science was expected to empower those who possessed it—Hindus or Maharashtrians. The other side in relation to which the empowerment occurred, at least for Bhatkhande, was usually “Muslim masters” or “Muslim performers.”

### 3. STANDARDIZATION AND SYSTEMATIZATION

Along with the notion of “science,” reformers often voiced the necessity to “systematize” Hindustani music. The All-India Music Conferences persistently voiced the need of systematization and repeatedly listed the issue as one of the aims of the conferences (though without much success). Toward the conclusion of the First All-India Music Conference, the conference leaders passed Resolutions, one of which was about systematizing Hindustani music. The Chairman of the Conference Committee announced the Committee’s agreement that “it [was] desirable to have a *uniform raga system* for Hindustani music.” The Conference decided to establish a Standing Committee, which was entrusted to “determine and provide such a system” (AIMC 1918: 54). Forming a Committee

did not happen very frequently for a specific musical issue. During the first decade of the All-India Music Conferences' existence, the only comparable case was the Committee appointed to determine a notation system best suited for use as the nation-wide standard notation. The two cases of special Committees—one for systematizing ragas and another for standardizing notation—show that the reformers were centrally concerned with systematization and standardization. In the second conference in Delhi (1918), the following issues were listed among the aims of the Conferences. Hindustani music needed to be organized into “*a regular system,*” and such a system would entail “*a uniform system of Ragas and Talas*” as well as “*a uniform system of notation*” (AIMC 1919: 61-62). Fascination with the uniform, standard, and systematic is plainly audible in these proclamations. At these early All-India Music Conferences, systematization meant producing a single complete system, in which everything in Hindustani music (every raga and every tala) had its place. “Uniform system of notation” was also an important topic in reformist discourses and will be discussed later.

Among music reformers, Bhatkhande was the most dedicated to the idea of systematization. His diaries during the study trips record his eagerness to systematize. The following is his diary entries as Prabhakar Chichore paraphrased them.

Reaching Madras on 15<sup>th</sup> November 1904 he writes, he would not waste time in visiting Courts ... of the Rajas having nothing to do with the progress of music, nor would he waste time and money in meeting professional female artists who, as per his experience, would not help in the *systematization* of music, his primary aim of life (Chinchore 1988: 22).

He identified systematization to be the “primary aim” of his life. Although the above example singles out “professional female artists” (i.e., courtesans) for not being able to aid in systematization, Bhatkhande was not so much concerned with the social stigma of courtesans. He disregarded any type of musician who could not help him in his effort (unless the artist was exceptional in performance). Diaries from his study trips in 1907 and 1908 reveal that Bhatkhande did not wish to spend time with artists who could not elucidate theoretical aspects of their art or who did not have the knowledge of relevant literature—be they Hindu or Muslim, hereditary or not hereditary (Chinchore 1988: 22-23). The music’s academic side in general and systematization in particular carried the most significance for Bhatkhande.

The reformers’ quest for systematization and standardization appeared often in combination with the notion of “science.” Maharaja Sayaji Rao of Baroda, the patron of the First Conference, was introduced to the conference as a person deeply interested in “*systematizing* Indian Music and placing it on a *scientific basis*” (AIMC 1918: 4). In a letter to the Education Department of the United Provinces Government, Umanath Bali wrote that the second objectives of starting the national academy of music in Lucknow—to be Marris College—was “to arrange for new Rag productions on *scientific and systematic* lines” (Bali 1926a: 1). In these examples, systematization represented part of science, a way of putting music “on a scientific basis,” or something comparable to science. It is not surprising that the notions of systematization, standardization, and science would occur together in discourses of the music reform. If we accept Thomas

Kuhn's argument, a scientific field comes to exist only when all its practitioners agree on a paradigm: a set of theories or explanatory models, including assumptions and vocabulary that come with them (Kuhn 1970). To be agreed upon, the theories or explanatory models must be standardized, and practitioners should use them systematically in the same manner. Likewise, the music reformers aimed to "systematize" Hindustani classical music. That is, they called for constructing a "system," which was organized by rules that govern all ragas and talas and, therefore, also defined ragas and talas. Such a "system" would work as an explanatory model, which everybody would hopefully accept. Raga rules (derived from the explanatory model) would then be standardized, and everybody should use the rules and associated vocabulary in an agreed manner. The reformers' special interest in systematization and standardization derived from their desire to duplicate for Hindustani music methods of science—that is, "hard" science (the kind of science Kuhn discussed). If a uniform, standardized system was a necessary condition of "science," so it must be for the study of Hindustani music. In practical terms, the ideas of "standardization" and "systematization" produced more concrete debates than the generic notion of "science."

At the 1916 All-India Music Conference, Bhatkhande had hereditary master-musicians sit on the stage, in a semicircle. An empty chair was placed beside each artist for Bhatkhande to sit and question the musicians. He asked each singer to sing a certain raga and took notes on analytical aspects such as scale, stressed notes, typical note combinations, and so forth. Bhatkhande

repeated the exercise for each musician, compared the obtained data, and announced the largest common denominators. These largest common denominators, Bhatkhande suggested, should be accepted as standard forms of the raga. In other words, Bhatkhande announced the most commonly used raga scale and proposed that the scale be considered the standard. Those who used variant scales were asked to conform. By the same token, Bhatkhande declared stressed notes and note combinations used by the majority to be the standards, and he prodded musicians who rendered the raga otherwise to accept the raga's standard forms (Kelkar 1998). With such an agreement, a raga would be consistent throughout Hindustani music culture. Bhatkhande suggested changes for the sake of uniformity. Standardization proved more problematic than other aspects of the "science of music." The standardizing attitude cost Bhatkhande support of musicians who might otherwise have been sympathetic to his work. The traditional hereditary singers whom Bhatkhande consulted at the Conference in 1916 immediately voiced objection. They refused to give up their own gharanas' ways of singing a certain raga; they rejected conforming to other gharanas' manners of singing it.

Some non-hereditary musicians also found standardization objectionable. The Pandit family of Gwalior did not approve of standardization. The family produced renowned singers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, carrying on the style of Gwalior gharana handed down to the family by its founder Haddu Khan and his kinsman Nissar Hussain Khan. Krishna Rao Shankar Pandit (1893-1989)—renowned singer and contemporary to

Bhatkhande—had a rather strained relationship with him. Krishna Rao’s son L. K. Pandit maintains that the core of the problem was the two figures’ different attitudes toward standardization. According to him, the Pandit family was never opposed to reformist efforts such as organizing music schools, using notations, or publishing compositions in textbooks. Krishna Rao Pandit and his father Shankar Rao Pandit did so themselves. Nevertheless, it was impossible for Krishna Rao Pandit to reconcile himself to Bhatkhande’s idea of standardization. He was more interested in maintaining specific features of each gharana—varied treatments of ragas and unique styles of performance—than “generalizing” them (Pandit 1996: 84-87).

The preference for standard treatment and neatly defined rules for a raga continued among the next generation of reformers. The main disciple of Bhatkhande, S. N. Ratanjankar held the opinion that raga rules should be the same for all musicians while styles of performance could vary. Sumati Mutatkar recalls that Ratanjankar regularly expressed this opinion to his students at the Marris College of Hindustani Music (Mutatkar 1998b). Ratanjankar’s opinion can be interpreted to mean that gharana differences should remain within the domain of performance style and should not touch structural elements of ragas. Another reformer, B. R. Deodhar disclosed a similar proclivity for raga uniformity. Deodhar was a student of Vishnu Digambar Paluskar. In addition to establishing his own school and teaching music, as most of Paluskar’s students did, Deodhar wrote extensively on music related topics and lobbied for the inclusion of music as a subject in higher education. He interviewed Kesar Bai in 1949. Kesar Bai

was trained by Alladiya Khan, hereditary master of the Jaipur gharana, and she was one of the most celebrated singers in the early to mid-twentieth century. In the interview, Deodhar questioned her about the uniformity of a certain raga among her gharana's singers. Rather than paraphrasing, I reproduce Deodhar's writing for the sake of liveliness (Deodhar 1993: 230-231).

Deodhar: [M]usicians belonging to your [school] sing four or five kinds of [raga] *Kafi Kanada*. Some people find that objectionable. What is your opinion?

Kesar Bai: Tell me. How many gharanas are there?

D: Quite a few.

K: And how many kinds of [raga] *Kanada* are there?

D: Theoretically there are eighteen varieties of *Kanada*.

K: What about [ragas] *Bageshri*, *Nayaki*, *Darbari*, *Sahana*? They are also [kinds of] *Kanadas*, are they not? When different [schools] began to introduce some notes of raga *Kafi* [into raga *Kanada*] and started calling the hybrid raga *Kafi Kanada*, one [school] used *Sahana* and *Kafi*, another [school] chose *Bageshri* and *Kafi*, and yet another preferred to inject some *Kafi* into *Nayaki*. So, in a sense, the eighteen varieties of *Kanada* recognized by science can be developed into as many varieties of *Kafi Kanada*. We sing only four or five varieties out of these. What is wrong with that?

D: What you say is perfectly logical, and theoretically there is nothing wrong in recognizing four or five varieties of *Kafi Kanada*. The point I am trying to make is that all musicians belonging to your [school] do not conform to one well-defined rule. For instance, in your presentation of the [composition] "*Lai Re Madha Piya*," you make a minimal use of the [sixth scale note].... But one renowned (female) singer of your school avoids using [the sixth scale note] in the opening ... but after that she uses that note freely and with conspicuous force.... Don't you think it strange that the same raga should be presented by two musicians in such radically different ways?

K: Only a few people have received proper training from Khansaheb [i.e., Alladiya Khan, her mentor]. They can be counted on the fingers of one hand. But there are many today who claim to have been trained by him. So Khansaheb is not responsible for the manner in which others sing. Nor am I. They sing in the manner in which they were taught. They too are not to blame. Our times were difficult. It was difficult to learn music.

In the above quotation, Deodhar is clearly more interested in finding consistent rules that govern the raga *Kafi Kanada* than his distinguished interviewee. Kesar Bai, on the other hand, does not seem to be troubled by inconsistency. In Kesar Bai's arguments, the inconsistency could have come from using different aspects of the parent raga, or it could have been a result of differences in learning privilege. In either case, differences could not have been avoided under the given circumstances. Thus, no one should be held responsible for different treatments of the raga. Deodhar concludes at the end of the interview that one "should not bother to analyze ragas sung by musicians who were trained [in] the traditional method." Instead, he continues, one should simply enjoy their performances. One should pay attention to pleasurable presentations of ragas, not to accurate interpretations of them (Deodhar 1993: 231). The above cases show that a keen interest in the standard—standard raga rules and interpretations—was peculiar to reformers. Non-reformist musicians (hereditary or not) in the above examples were unconcerned with or even critical of standardization. It is indicative that Deodhar mentioned the category of "musicians trained in the traditional method" and characterized them as not following consistent rules of a raga. By logical extension, then, Deodhar associated "musicians trained in the new method (i.e., at reformist institutions)" with following consistent raga rules. Deodhar's

categorization of musicians, too, implies that it was primarily the reformers' concern to seek standard and consistent raga rules, not others.'<sup>11</sup>

#### 4. NOTATIONS

##### a. Reasons for Having Notations

Notation was another subject that reformers associated with the notion of science and debated with the purpose of standardizing it. Reformers made notation an extremely vital issue in the reform. Though the ideology of science was certainly not absent, reformers rationalized their enthusiasm for notation largely in pragmatic terms. Notation was necessary for (a) recording and preserving musical works and for (b) music education. The latter “music education” particularly referred to teaching music to groups of students in a formal educational setting.

Music reformers had an intense interest in notation at least from the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>12</sup> The oldest available record of notation devised in modern times is that of Kshetra Mohan Goswami, a music teacher and reformer in late nineteenth century Calcutta. Evidence suggests that his notation system was

---

<sup>11</sup> Over the years, standardization occurred to some extent. Written or textbook explanations of ragas may have contributed to the uniformity, but another (probably more) significant factor was that gharanas (schools) grew less distinct in manners of performance. Nonetheless, standards remain non-binding; people continue to perform ragas in slightly different ways.

<sup>12</sup> One frequently encounters different assertions as to who developed “the first” notation system in India. These statements are misleading for a number of reasons. First, old Sanskrit treatises on music did utilize notations. Therefore, statements about “the first person to devise a notation” are valid only in the context of the nineteenth century. Second, oral histories passed on locally—in a city, a region, or at a reformist music school—have the tendency of calling the local hero the “first one” to devise a notation (or anything else). Such contentions, however, are occasionally unfounded when verified with a larger pool of information. Any statement about being “the first” invites caution.

ready by 1858, when a band consisting of Indian instruments played out of a score prepared by him (Capwell 1986: 144, 148). Thereafter, an increasing number of publications demonstrates that increasing numbers of notations were devised. In 1864 G. L. Chhatre, a music teacher at a girls' school, published a book containing notations of devotional songs and Marathi folksongs (Ranade 1967: 38, 42). The abovementioned K. M. Goswami made his notation system public in his books in 1868 and 1869. Goswami's disciple Krishnadhan Bandyopadhyay used yet another type of notation in his 1867 publication. Maula Baksh—who later led the Baroda Music College—developed his notation system in the late 1870s or early 1880s. Adityaram Vyas devised yet another notation around 1880 (Rosse 1995: 67). In the 1880s and 1890s, musicians at the Pune Gayan Samaj published books using the Society's own notation system. In the 1890s, Chinnaswami Mudaliyar advocated his modified version of staff notation for writing Indian music. Jyotirindranath Tagore had developed his own notation system sometime before 1897, when his voluminous songbook was published. These publications indicate that quite a few types of notation systems coexisted, even before the turn of the century, when Paluskar and Bhatkhande completed their individual notation systems. The above examples most probably represent only a small part of notation systems that circulated before Paluskar and Bhatkhande. After 1900, for a few decades at least, music reformers continued their efforts to devise a new notation system or modify an existent one. These attempts added to the complex multiplicity of notation systems. It is not much of an exaggeration to say that, in the late nineteenth to early twentieth century, each

music society or music school attempted to develop its own notation system. Notation became so vital an issue that E. Rosenthal, a contemporary western sympathizer, observed that every single music conference held in the 1910s and 1920s involved keen debates on notation systems (Rosenthal 1993[1928]: xviii).

Reformers reasoned that notations would be necessary for the record and preservation of musical works as well as for educational purposes. Practically speaking, the majority of notation systems were devised for specific classes, to notate musical materials to be taught in those classes. Typically, music teachers would publish the notated materials as textbooks. For instance, G. L. Chhatre's attempt to notate—one of the earliest attempts—appeared in the textbook he prepared for his music classes. He taught music at girls' schools run by the Students' Literary and Scientific Society—a social reform organization focused on women's education.<sup>13</sup> Thus, his notation and his book *Gitalipi* (lit. *Song Notation*), published in 1864, emerged as teaching aids (Ranade 1967: 38, Rosse 1995: 65). Kshetra Mohan Goswami's notation circulated most widely through its use in the educational institutions his patron established—i.e., Bengal Music School from 1871 and Bengal Academy of Music from 1881. The use of notation provided the Bengal Music School a selling point, advertising notation as a novel and scientific teaching method. S. M. Tagore, Principal of the schools, published several textbooks using Goswami's notations, including one for playing the mridangam (1872), for sitar (1872 and 1875), and for harmonium (1874). The Bengal Academy of Music was an examining body. The Academy must have

---

<sup>13</sup> The Students' Literary and Scientific Society was founded by Dadabhai Naoroji, prominent nationalist and social reformer, and other graduates of the Elphinstone School in Mumbai.

further spread Goswami's notation because the Academy provided curricula and exams to other affiliated music schools. *Gita-prevesa: A Manual of Hindu Vocal Music in Bengali* (1882/3), published soon after the Academy's establishment, was a textbook for music schools and may have been used at affiliated schools. Other examples equally attest to the primacy of educational purposes in devising and circulating notation systems. Maula Baksh developed a notation system for the purpose of using it at his own school and at the Baroda Music School. So did Paluskar and his disciples. They devised their notations having in mind specific uses and specific institutions. Initially, in the 1900s, Bhatkhande used his notation for recording compositions sung by performing artists. However, later educational use of his notation far exceeds any other use in importance and frequency.

### **b. Standardizing Notations**

Notation constituted a focal point of reformist debates in the early twentieth century. Since numerous notation systems already existed by then, debates were not about having a notation, but about standardizing it—that is, how to agree upon one notation system whose use would be enforced across all regions. The First All-India Music Conference (1916) passed Resolutions that included the problem of notation. On the last day of the Conference, the Chair of the Organizing Committee read the Resolutions, and the attendees passed them. Resolution 4 stated the following.

This Conference is of opinion that Notation is necessary for imparting Musical Education, and that the selection of proper system of Notation be entrusted to a Sub-committee... (AIMC 1918: 54).

Between the 1900s and 1930s, however, “debates” about the standardization remained parallel, independent statements about the superiority of one notation system or another. Each reformer adhered to his or his mentor’s notation system, suggesting that it should be universally adopted as the standard.

### ***Two Groups of Notations***

While there were many notation systems, they largely fell into two types. One group of reformers favored a modified version of western staff notation. To modify staff notation, reformers typically added some signs to express “microtones” (i.e., extra and double-extra sharps and flats) and possibly some grace notes. Slight differences in pitch as well as extensive graces and slides are central features of Hindustani classical music, but ordinary staff notation does not have convenient symbols to represent them. A slightly more drastic modification was to use solfa letters on staff notation (Ranade 1967: 38). In this first category of reformers preferring modified staff notation, there are Krishnadhan Bandyopadhyay and his followers, Chinnaswami Mudaliyar and his followers,<sup>14</sup> E. Clements and K. B. Deval. On the other hand, the second group of reformers preferred more indigenous notations that used Indian alphabets. Depending on regions, those notations employed letters of Devanagari, Bengali, or Gujarati

---

<sup>14</sup> Chinnaswami Mudaliyar published an article “Oriental Music in European Notation” in 1893. This publication seems to have been very influential, as Rosenthal calls it a “monumental” work. Several other collections of Europeanized Indian music followed Mudaliyar’s publication. As of 1927 or 1928 another musicologist in Madras was working on a book of Indian songs transcribed in staff notation (Rosenthal 1993: 77-78, 210).

alphabets. In order to represent melody, this type of notation employed the letters that corresponded to the scale notes: *sa, re, ga, ma, pa, dha, ni*. The alphabet-based notations differed from each other because they employed dissimilar signs for indicating durations, tala divisions, octaves, and pitch inflections. Those who devised this type of notation typically used as their model a notation found in old Sanskrit treatises such as *Raga Vibodha* and *Sangita Ratnakara*. K. M. Goswami, Jyotindranath Tagore, P. G. Gharpure, V. N. Bhatkhande, and their followers developed and used notations of this category. For the most part, the two groups—one supporting staff notation the other alphabet notation—did not make any compromise to each other. While it is a common knowledge among scholars of Hindustani classical music that various styles of notation existed in the early twentieth century, they are seldom discussed in detail with example figures. I therefore provide a few details and show what the notations looked like, with the exception of Bhatkhande’s notation which everyone knows.

### ***Alphabet-based Notations***

Kshetra Mohan Goswami’s notation, which is the first documented notation in modern times, illustrates what an alphabet-based notation looks like. His notation system used syllables written in Bengali alphabets, which represented the scale notes *sa, re, ga ma pa, dha, ni* (i.e., do, re, mi, fa, sol, la, te). To indicate the three octaves used in Hindustani classical music, Goswami’s notation used dots. A dot above a letter indicated that the particular note was in the higher octave; a dot underneath an alphabet meant that the note was in the lower octave. Notes in the middle octave were unmarked (Figure a.).

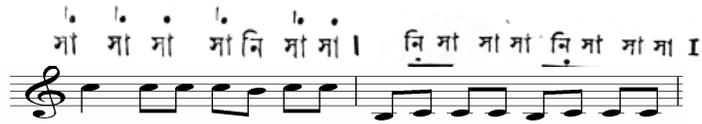


Figure a

Like octaves, altered notes were shown by the addition of signs. A triangle above a letter represented a flat note, while a flag-like sign above a letter represented a sharp note (Figure b).

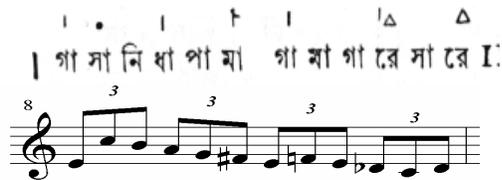


Figure b

Tala divisions were represented with vertical lines, with the *sam* (cadence beat) and *khali* (counter-cadence beat) shown by a cross- and a zero-looking signs respectively (Figure c).<sup>15</sup>



Figure c

<sup>15</sup> This footnote is for those who specialize in north Indian classical music. Although the signs for *sam* and *khali* are the same as those used in Bhatkhande's notation, Goswami's notation (along with Tagore's notation discussed below) has number three in Bengali script at the second *tali* and number one for the third *tali*. That is, the Bengali notations start counting *tali* after *khali*, which is represented by the symbol zero. This is in contrast to Bhatkhande's notation, which start counting *tali* from the *sam*.



notes). Likewise, F and F sharp have different letters that stand for them ninth and tenth notes).



Figure e

The symbol for *khali* (counter-cadence beat) is a small circle, as in Goswami's notation, but the marking of *sam* (cadence beat) differed (Figure f).<sup>16</sup>



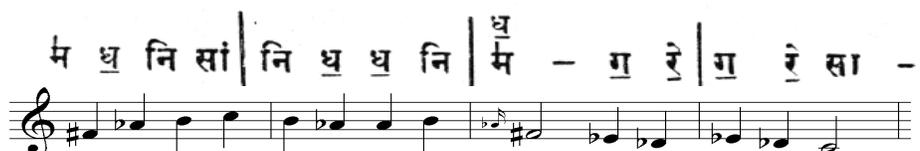
Figure f

Tagore's notation represented prolonged notes by placing the symbol for the vowel [a:], which looks like a vertical bar. For instance, the sixth beat in Figure f only has this symbol, which means that this beat is a continuation of the preceding beat. The same applies to the ninth, eleventh, and sixteenth beat of the Figure f. Tagore's notation is called *akar-matrik* in Bengali because the vowel sign (*akar*) indicated prolongation by a beat (*matra*).

In sum, the symbols are dissimilar between Goswami's and Tagore's notation systems, but they were comparable in their principles of representing sound. Likewise, Bhatkhande's notation offered primarily the same features but

<sup>16</sup> As with Goswami's notation above, Tagore's notation starts counting *tali* after *khali*, which is conceptualized as zero. Therefore, the symbol for *sam* in Tagore's notation is the number two in Bengali script—unlike Bhatkhande's notation that counts *tali* from the *sam*.

with different sets of signs and alphabets. Letters from Devanagari alphabets, instead of Bengali alphabets, stood for scale notes. His notation used dots to refer to the upper or lower octave, as Goswami’s notation did. Signs for sharp and flat notes differed, however. Bhatkhande’s notation used a horizontal bar underneath a letter (not a triangle above or a different letter) to represent a flat note. A vertical line above a letter (not a flag-like sign or a different letter) represented a sharp note (Figure g).



**Figure g**

It must be clear from the descriptions that these alphabet-based notations were alike, and technically it was possible and even easy to reconcile them.

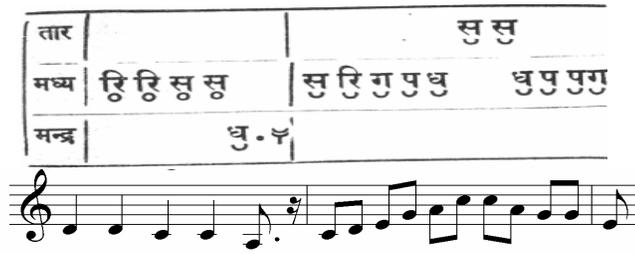
Both Jyotirindranath Tagore’s and K. M. Goswami’s notation systems were commonly used in Bengal during the early twentieth century. Bhatkhande’s notation system spread via schools and organizations that adopted his teaching method—largely in Hindi, Marathi, and Gujarati speaking areas. By the late twentieth century, it became the most widely used notation in the northern regions of the subcontinent.

### ***Mixed Feature Notations***

Paluskar’s and Maula Baksh’s notation systems do not neatly fall into either the “modified staff notation” or the “alphabet-based notation” category. Maula Baksh, the Principal of the Baroda Music School, devised a notation

system that was used at the school since its opening in 1886. In all accounts, his notation resembled staff notation or was based on staff notation. Maula Baksh learned staff notation from the British Residency, under Maharaja Malhar Rao's command, in order to create something similar for Indian music (Athavale n.d., Thakkar 1992: 18). It is not clear, however, to what extent his notation resembled staff notation. Writers on the reform movement portray it variously as "completely western staff notation," or "basically staff notation but modified to accommodate Indian music" (Thakkar 1992: 21) or as "basically Indian notation with some elements of staff notation." While acknowledging that Maula Baksh's notation was generally akin to staff notation, Rosse considers that Baksh's notation very likely received influences from Goswami's notation, which was an alphabet-based notation. Maula Baksh was highly impressed with K. M. Goswami's notation and endorsed it as a notation all musicians should adopt (Rosse 1995: 139). V. R. Athavale does not portray Baksh's notation to be primarily based on staff notation. He compares Baksh's notation to Paluskar's, on the basis that they both have some elements of staff notation (Athavale n.d.). Generally speaking, Paluskar's notation is not considered staff notation-based.

On the other hand, the notation system Paluskar developed used letters of the alphabet standing for solmization, in the same manner as all other alphabet-based notations. His notation, however, had three staves that represented the upper, middle, and lower octaves, while most alphabet-based notations used only one line (Figure h).



**Figure h**

Paluskar's notation generally did not mark sharps and flats (because the knowledge of a raga scale makes such markings unnecessary). It used signs only when a certain raga required two forms of a scale note (for example, both natural and flat sevenths) or the note was sharper or flatter than regular sharp or flat (extra or double extra sharp/flat). Figure i shows signs for extra-flat and extra-sharp notes (Figure i).<sup>17</sup>

▲म extra sharp F
‡नि extra flat B

**Figure i**

Like some of the alphabet-based notations, Paluskar's notation expressed durations by adding signs under the notes. In Figure j, notes with a circle underneath are transcribed as quarter notes, while those with a curve underneath have half value and are represented as eighth notes.

---

<sup>17</sup> It seems that Vishnu Digambar Paluskar considered that if two forms of a note appear in a raga, one of them was necessarily extra-flat or extra-sharp. Thus the raga *Khamaj* has natural seventh and extra-flat seventh (*shuddh ni* and *ati-komal ni*) in his textbooks, although most other textbooks such as Bhatkhande's explain that the raga has natural seventh and flat seventh. As I wrote, Paluskar's textbooks never marked regular altered notes. He marked them only when the note was extra-sharp or extra-flat, or when two forms of a note coexisted in a *raga*. In the latter case, too, he conceptualized one of the two forms to be extra-flat or extra-sharp. All these mean that there is no symbol for (regular) flat or (regular) sharp in Paluskar's notation. I do not find any.

तार	सुसु.५	सु रि ग रि सु रि सु	
मध्य	ग ण्ड	पु षु	धु.
मन्द्र			


**Figure j**

While sharing basic concepts with alphabet-based notations, Paluskar’s notation exhibits quite a few influences from western staff notation. First, the marks for altered notes (i.e., sharps and flats) preceded the notes, as is customary in western staff notation. On the other hand, most alphabet notations placed such signs above or under the notes. Second, the signs have shapes reminiscent of comparable signs in staff notation. For instance, Paluskar’s notation shows the value of a quarter note by a semicircle, of one-eighth by two semicircles, and of one-sixteenth by three semicircles. These resemble the adding of “flags” in staff notation, where a quarter note has no flag, one-eighth note one flag, one-sixteenth note two flags, and so forth (Figure k).



**Figure k**

In addition, Paluskar’s notation placed a dot after a note, signifying that the note should have one and a half times of duration, much like the dotted notes in staff notation (See the dotted notes in Figure h and Figure j). Third, more significant than the shapes of signs, Paluskar’s notation shows its affinity to staff notation in

its conceptualization of time. Both notation systems display time through units of cumulative halves. That is, these notations have independent symbols for the values of 4, 2, 1, 1/2, 1/4, etc.

नाम.	निशाणी.	Note Value
चतस्र	×	4
गुरु	२	2
लघु	—	1
द्रुत	०	1/2
अणुद्रुत	८	1/4
अणु अणु द्रुत	६	1/8
अणु अणु अणु द्रुत	६	1/16

(Paluskar 1930:6)

**Chart A**

In Paluskar's notation, these symbols were placed under a note to indicate its' duration. The same principle applied to symbols for durations of breaks (Paluskar 1929, 1930).

नाम.	निशाणी.	Value
चतस्र विश्रांति.	✕	4
गुरु विश्रांति.	२	2
लघु विश्रांति.	—	1
द्रुत विश्रांति.	०	1/2
अणुद्रुत विश्रांति.	८	1/4
अणु अणु द्रुत विश्रांति.	६	1/8
अणु अणु अणु द्रुत विश्रांति.	६	1/16

(Paluskar 1930: 15)

## **Chart B**

Paluskar's notation system shared the most basic feature of alphabet-based notations—solmization represented by letters of the alphabet—and Paluskar maintained that his notation was based on a system found in Sanskrit treatises. However, Paluskar's system contained significant influences from staff notation, especially in the conceptualization of time. In fact, conceptualizing time in terms of division by two would have been very limiting in the context of Hindustani classical music, which is rhythmically very fluid. Notes can be divided by or grouped into any number, and rhythmic asymmetry and irregularity are often admired features. Paluskar's notation resulted in unnecessary complexity when representing rhythm.

### ***Debates between the Two Groups***

Supporters of different notation systems passionately debated their divergent opinions. Such debates took place prominently at least from the 1870s to 1920s and later. While supporters of any two notations systems could have argued against each other, most intense arguments were exchanged between supporters of a modified staff notation and those of an alphabet-style notation. It is symptomatic that the two earliest records of notation use in modern times consist of one case favoring staff notation (Chhatre) and the other one favoring alphabet notation (Goswami). Enthusiasm for using modified staff notation gradually waned as the decades progressed in the twentieth century. Staff notation supporters continued to uphold their preference at least until about 1930

(and most probably one more decade). On the other hand, alphabet-based notations undoubtedly came to prevail from the 1940s.

Debates on notation occasionally became visible beyond the sphere of the music reform. Charles Capwell describes such disputes in the late nineteenth century between Krishnadhan Bandyopadhyay, staff notation supporter, and Kaliprasanno Bandyopadhyay, supporter of Goswami's alphabet notation. The two battled in publication. Krishnadhan published a book in 1867 to demonstrate the suitability of staff notation, and Kaliprasanno issued a counter-publication in 1868 to demonstrate the inappropriateness of staff notation for writing Hindustani music. The debates on notation spilled over to magazines and newspapers, becoming prominent enough in the public life of Calcutta that Europeans living in the city joined or commented on the debates (Capwell 1986: 146-9).

Debates on notation continued into the twentieth century. Notation was one of the most important topics at the All-India Music Conferences in the 1910s and 1920s. The First All-India Music Conference in 1916 had a few papers focused on the topic of notation, and most speeches addressed the issue of notation. And speeches were many because of the formal character of the conference: speeches by President, Chairman, Reception Committee Chair, General Secretary, etc. A multitude of notation systems already existed by the time of the conference, and its organizers declared standardization to be the objective of the conference. The main problem was to decide which notation should to be nationally adopted as the standard one. One of the presenters, N. N. Bandyopadhyay, son of Krishnadhan Bandyopadhyay, advocated his father's

notation. He contended that western staff notation, as modified by his late father, was the best tool for reinvigorating the heritage of Hindustani classical music. Following him, Vishnu Digambar Paluskar read his paper to counter N. N. Bandyopadhyay. Paluskar talked against the use of staff notation, maintaining that old Sanskrit treatises contained enough materials that could be used with some modifications. Paluskar thus denied the need of importing any notation system. In particular, he recommended the notation he had devised, enumerating its merits in being able to write Hindustani music with all its intricacies. To prove the point, he had his students sing from a book to demonstrate the effectiveness of his notation system. Following Paluskar, another supporter of staff notation delivered her speech. Maragathawalli Ammal<sup>18</sup> read a paper that supported the use of western staff notation supplemented with additional signs of her own. In response to Paluskar, she too sang from her notation, intending to exhibit its efficacy in conveying delicate microtones. The next presenter, E. Clements, also defended the adoption of staff notation.<sup>19</sup> Clements proposed his own method of supplementing staff notation for writing Hindustani music—a method yet different from those suggested by the previous two presenters (AIMC 1918: 31-33). Guessing from the content of his 1913 book, Clements was advocating a

---

<sup>18</sup> Maragathawalli Ammal was a daughter of Abraham Pandither, one of the most prominent music scholars at the time.

<sup>19</sup> E. Clements was British and a judge by profession. He was nevertheless very active in his pursuit of musicology, especially in the 1910s and 1920s. Clements published books and articles, presented at conferences, and worked in collaboration with the Indian musicologist Krishnaji Ballal Deval. In the 1920s, E. Clements and K. B. Deval published *Handbook of Staff Notation for Indian Music*. Clements also organized or tried to organize a conference on staff notation in 1928 or about 1930 (Deodhar 1993: 47-48, Misra 1985: 13, Athavale n.d.). As expected from his backing of the use of staff notation, Clements was not on good terms with Paluskar or Bhatkhande.

version of staff notation that could express the twenty-two *srutis* (microtones). Clements did not approve of using staff notation as it is (Rosenthal 1993: 126-127). Discussions during the Conference did not lead to any consensus, and the matter was left for a special task committee. A noticeable feature in these debates is that each speaker adhered to his or her version of notation, with no speculation into ways of compromising or merging their notations. Even those who supported modified staff notation did not try to reconcile their differences in manners of modification. As in the late nineteenth century Calcutta, debates on notation remained parallel and unresolved arguments at the All-India Music Conference of the twentieth century.

At the end of this First Conference in 1916, the Conference Committee passed the Resolutions, including one on notation:

This Conference is of opinion that Notation is necessary for imparting Musical education, and that the selection of proper system of Notation be entrusted to a Sub-committee... (AIMC 1918: 54).

The subsequent All-India Music Conferences continued to discuss the same issue: which notation system would be most suitable for the national level adoption. At the Second through Fourth All-India Music Conferences (in 1918, 1919, and 1925), keynote addresses and the conference resolutions reiterated that the standardization of notation was one of the Conferences' objectives.

For the Third All-India Music Conference in 1919, Sivendranath Basu, General Secretary of the Reception Committee, prepared a chart of notations "as a basis for discussion" (AIMC 1920: 10). Basu planned a session to compare and evaluate notation systems. "Experts" attending the conference were to take notes

onto the chart and assess different notations. Compared to the First Conference in 1916, the Third Conference had fewer presentations by supporters of staff notation. However, The Raja of Gauripur,<sup>20</sup> Prabhat Chandra Barua, spoke vehemently in defense of staff notation (AIMC 1920: 130-142). The Raja—one of the financial patrons of the conference—was a follower of Krishnadhan Bandyopadhyay, who advocated the use of staff notation in the late nineteenth century. In his lengthy and elaborate speech, the Raja emphasized the virtue of staff notation and offered counterarguments to those who rejected staff notation because of its foreign origin. In his opinion, staff notation was “the very best,” because it had been developed and ameliorated over centuries. It was time tested, unlike the multitude of newly developed Indian notations, over which the reformers had not been able to agree. After the centuries of improvement, the Raja contended, staff notation became very simple, so much so that it enabled sight-reading. This showed, in the Raja’s opinion, that graphic representation of sound was superior to word representation, such as the alphabet-based notations that his opponents promoted. Pictorial representation was more direct than verbal description.

The most interesting among his arguments was the concept that notation was a scientific tool. The Raja claimed that the study of music was universal: “The *Science of Music* is not the personal property of any country or community; it is a thing that belongs to the Universe as a whole” (AIMC 1920: 135).

---

<sup>20</sup> Gauripur was a princely state in Bengal.

Therefore, notation for him belonged to the same category as a mathematics formula or industrial machinery. He compared notation with a steam engine.

Now the steam engine of western culture is being accepted as good in preference to the old hard ways of journey on foot.... Why then take exception under the false banner of originality to the adopting of a beneficent method [i.e., staff notation] accepted by many of the wise? (AIMC 1920: 137)

In addition to the steam engine, the Raja defended staff notation by comparing it to printing and railway technologies. In his view, the Indian effort to devise a better notation was futile. Even if reformers succeeded in creating a better one, it would be impossible to persuade the rest of the world to adopt it. Staff notation had been undisputedly accepted and used for so long, for centuries, and any attempt to replace it was being unrealistic (AIMC 1920: 136). This statement betrays Raja's assumption that only one system of notation could be used as the standard notation in the whole world (or at least in "the civilized world," as he always qualified). In sum the Raja stated that there should be only one notation, just as there should be only one system of representing basic elements in chemistry.

Another related line of reasoning was "world consensus." The Raja reiterated that staff notation was backed by the consensus of the civilized world: "Almost the whole civilized world has been obeying and accepting" staff notation. It was "a beneficent method accepted by many of the wise" and the "system of notation respected throughout the civilized world." For centuries, staff notation "held undisputed sovereignty over the gentle community of the world" (AIMC 1920: 135-8). Thus the Raja portrayed the use of staff notation as

something inevitable. It was inevitable because there could only be one notation for the whole world, and the world—redefined as the civilized world—had already made its choice.

The most common reasons for rejecting staff notation were its foreign origin and the potential danger that it might affect Indian music in some way or other. The Raja contended that he did not see any merit in the assertion that staff notation destroyed Hindu music's originality. Indian civilization, he said, had been receiving foreign influences for ages. Moreover, Indians were now imitating the west in other areas of activity, using print media, comma signs, algebraic symbols, and so forth (AIMC 1920: 137-8). The alphabet notations that his opponents promoted were nothing but imitation of the western sol-fa system. On these grounds, the Raja considered untenable the rejection of staff notation based on its foreign origin.

Rather than being harmful, staff notation would have positive effects on Hindustani music culture. He claimed that staff notation would enable musical exchanges with foreign countries. First, Indian music could be introduced abroad; in his words, Hindu music's "glory [could] shine forth in the far civilized regions." Second, staff notation would make it easy for Indians to gain new musical ideas from abroad or to learn music of foreign countries (AIMC 1920: 138-9). In this speech, the Raja of Gauripur employed most of the core arguments that staff notation supporters typically utilized.

M. Fredilis, Manager of the Baroda State Band, used comparable reasoning in his presentation at the Second All-India Music Conference in 1918.

He advocated the use of staff notation.<sup>21</sup> While reading his paper, he rejected alphabet-based notations because they had limited capability for writing intricate musical patterns. In his opinion, alphabet notations could only notate easy and light ragas, not those heavy ragas which professional artists took seriously and which contained a lot of subtle and elaborate melodic movements. As with the Raja of Gauripur, Fredilis believed musical notation to be “universal.” As a proof of the universality, Fredilis proffered the European situation. Though European countries vary in language, customs, and dresses, they all use the same musical notation: “a Bulgar plays out of the same sheet of music as a Turk or Frenchman.” Fredilis emphasized that musics of these countries differ as much as the musics of the East and West would differ (AIMC 1919: 25-6). He thus made a case for the universality of staff notation and at the same time refuted the idea that staff notation might change or damage the cultural authenticity of Indian classical music. Fredilis characterized staff notation to be not only universal but also neutral. It would not affect cultural differences and musical authenticities.

Furthermore, Fredilis took the stance that staff notation was beneficial to Hindustani classical music—not only neutral. He deemed staff notation to be “the only notation capable of [re]producing those [intricate] phrases which is the very life of Indian Music.” In other words, capturing the very essence of Indian classical music on paper depended on adopting staff notation. Staff notation alone enabled the nationalist project of representing national music. Fredilis

---

<sup>21</sup> M. Fredilis was a Russian Jew hired by the Maharaja of Baroda to lead the Baroda State Band. He was an assistant to Maula Baksh at the music school until the latter’s death in 1896. He served as the Manager of the Band until 1919, when the Maharaja appointed him to be the Principal of the School of Indian Music in Baroda.

appealed to a nationalist sentiment in yet another way. Staff notation, Fredilis argued, would also facilitate communications between Hindustani and Karnatak musicians (AIMC 1919: 26). Such communication was one of the main aims of the All-India Music Conferences. Desire for some kind of communion between the North Indian and South Indian classical musics recurs in reformist discourses throughout the first half of the century. This desire represented a musical version of the common nationalist aspiration for a unified Indian nation. Fredilis thus suggested that staff notation was not merely acceptable but rather beneficial and appealing. It was the only notation capable of doing justice to the national music. It could bind Hindustani and Karnatak musicians together, facilitating the creation of a unified, truly Indian music. Supporters of staff notation regularly had to justify their “non-patriotic” choice of notation. Most did so by neutralizing staff notation, as did Fredilis and the Raja of Gauripur in the above examples. Typically, they would maintain that the uniqueness and authenticity of Hindustani classical music would remain intact because notation was a neutral scientific device. Notation was culture blind, and thus staff notation could be used universally and also in India. Fredilis went a little beyond claiming neutrality and universality. He asserted that staff notation was helpful for the authenticity of Hindustani classical music; western staff notation, he implied, was a medium for exercising the patriotic desires of notating the “essence” of Indian classical music and of recreating a “truly national” music by merging the North and South.

Fredilis’s reasoning became further “nationalist” in the following year. The Second All-India Music Conference committee selected Fredilis to be a

member of the Sub-Committee on Notation. Soon after, the Maharaja of Baroda appointed Fredilis to be the Principal of the School of Indian Music in Baroda. It was at this time that this music school went through reorganization and adopted Bhatkhande's textbooks and teaching method. Bhatkhande visited Baroda to give instructions on his system of teaching. These two assignments provided Fredilis plenty of opportunities to interact with Bhatkhande and other alphabet notation supporters. At the Third All-India Music Conference in 1919, Fredilis advocated a simultaneous use of Bhatkhande's alphabet-based notation and what he called *rekha mandal sangit lekhan paddhati*—literally, line-and-circle music notation system. In Fredilis's description, this *rekha mandal* (line-and-circle) system is most similar to staff notation, though he never used the term. He explained its merits in the same manner as he had described staff notation before. The *rekha mandal* notation had five line staves. It was allegedly universal: with this notation, the “most intricate and beautiful Ragas sung in India” would be understood in “every part of the Universe by anyone who has a knowledge of the Rekha Mandal System” (AIMC 1920: 106). Fredilis praised Maragathawalli Ammal as one who adopted and demonstrated the utility of *rekha mandal* notation through publications. Fredilis also credited E. Clements for successfully introducing *rekha mandal* notation in Kanara Districts. Since both Clements and Maragathawalli Ammal were advocates of modified staff notation, it is certain that what Fredilis called *rekha mandal* notation was nothing but modified staff notation.

Fredilis authenticated the *rekha mandal* system by constructing a universal history of notation. He quoted one Sir John Stainer, Doctor of Music, to state that the earliest notation (neume) was of “Asiatic Origin” (AIMC 1920: 102). He contended that virtually the same notation system was used in medieval Europe (as neume), fourteenth century Japan (as intonation marks), and in the Indian treatises *Raga Vibodha* (1608). In Fredilis’s argument, the *sargam* system in India and the tonic-solfa system in Europe were historically equivalent, and he explained Guidonian notation with Indian terminology (using *sa re ga* instead of *do re mi*, for example). In his version of history, neume, alphabet notation, and staff notation all had universal origins. *Rekha mandal* notation’s prototypes were used in India, Europe, and Japan. Since it developed from these allegedly universally shared prototypes, Fredilis asserted that using *rekha mandal* notation would be a “reversion to the system in vogue in Ancient Times” for Indians (AIMC 1920: 101-107). His speech presents an extreme case of Indianizing western staff notation. Through giving it the serious, Indianized name *rekha mandal sangit lekhan paddhati* and assuming the existence of its prototype in Indian antiquity, he made staff notation Indian. Bizarre as this history of notation seems, Fredilis’s efforts were consistent: he tried to promote staff notation without offending nationalist sentiments. Along the way, he seems to have learned the rhetorical trick of Indian nationalism: authenticating something by demonstrating its origin in old treatise(s). He used this nationalist rhetorical

technique to persuade his Indian colleagues, while he still promoted staff notation.<sup>22</sup>

At the Third Conference, two speakers—M. Fredilis and S. Basu—endorsed the simultaneous use of staff notation and some kind of alphabet notation. Fredilis supported Bhatkhande’s notation and staff notation (a.k.a. *rekha mandal* notation). Apart from his claim that staff notation had an origin in Ancient India, his reason for supporting the *rekha-mandal*-alias-staff notation was that Indian music could be understood outside India. Sivendranath Basu, too, gave the same argument to uphold the simultaneous use of both types of notations. Basu considered that it was important to retain “our old” notation. Yet, “to spread [Indian music] worldwide, ... it [was] absolutely necessary ...to explain our old notation *side by side with the present Staff Notation*” (AIMC 1920: 11, original emphasis). In the example used earlier, the Raja of Gauripur also mentioned the possibility of international musical exchange as a reason for his defending staff notation.

To summarize, those who supported modified staff notation employed the following set of common arguments. First, staff notation was the best (the most complete, most developed, most effective, and so forth). It could represent intricate notes better than alphabet-based notations, and its graphic character made it easier to read. Second, notation was compared to a scientific apparatus,

---

<sup>22</sup> It was not uncommon for a foreign musician or musicologist living in India to claim that his work aimed to help and protect Indian national culture. To give another example, E. Clements developed a way of modifying staff notation so that it could represent the 22 *srutis* (microtones) within an octave. He thought his notation answered to the “national question” of preserving the authentic feature of Indian classical music (Rosenthal 1993: 125-129). That is, Clements considered the staff notation modified by him to be more authentic than alphabet-based notations, because the former could write down 22 *srutis*, which ancient Sanskrit treatises explicate.

which was universal. Notation was to remain constant despite differences of music cultures; it also would not affect the uniqueness of a music culture. Staff notation's usage throughout Europe substantiated its universality and cultural neutrality. Third, staff notation would encourage musical exchanges between India and abroad. Indian music would be known and understood abroad, and Indian musicians would understand and get ideas from foreign music ("foreign" and "abroad" implies "the west"). Supporters of alphabet notations disagreed. First, they opposed importing a notation system when they already had indigenous ones. There was no need or good reason to do so. Second, alphabet notations were equally capable and effective in representing sound. An alphabet notation could represent anything that staff notation could. Staff notation was not better. Third, staff notation was developed for a very different kind of music. Using this notation might entail some damage or at least compromise on the part of Hindustani classical music. Besides, staff notation was difficult to print.

Debates on the "best notation" continued for decades without yielding any definite answer. The Fourth All-India Music Conference in 1925 seemed to have followed the same pattern as the first three. In that conference, too, organizers expressed a general desirability of standardizing notation, while actual presentations and discussions on the subject remained parallel statements championing one's own notation. Rosenthal, the reform's contemporary observer, wrote: "Several interesting papers at the Conference revealed to the audience [that] the great diversity of opinion which exists respecting the vexed question of notation" (Rosenthal 1993: 85). No conference (the All-India Music

Conferences or any other conference) could produce any consensus on the matter—until the middle of the century. Debates took place not only at conferences but also in publications: books, magazines, and newspaper articles. Discussions on these venues never reached a definite conclusion either.

Differences of opinion occurred not only between modified staff notation supporters and sol-fa alphabet notation supporters. Each group had numerous variations within. As discussed earlier, alphabet-based notations varied in manners of representing the octaves, sharp and flat notes, note-values, and tala division. For instance, Paluskar's notation and Bhatkhande's notation both used alphabets. Yet Paluskar's had three staves to represent the three octaves, while Bhatkhande's had only one line but added a dot above or below notes to indicate upper or lower octave. A triangle above a letter represented a flat note in Goswami's notation; for the same purpose, Bhatkhande's notation used a bar underneath a letter. Most alphabet-based notations were alike in principles, and, as I mentioned earlier, it would have been technically easy to reconcile them. Nonetheless, the unification of notations never materialized in the early twentieth century. Similarly, each version of modified staff notation added different extra signs to signal microtones or grace notes. E. Clements complained in 1913 about the "elaborate superfluity of new and wonderful signs." He admonished "those who invent[ed] notations no better than others already in existence" for causing the confusion by choosing yet new signs for their own notations (Clements 1913 quoted in Rosenthal 1993: 128). Likewise, the Raja of Gauripur criticized "professors of music in our country" for their unwillingness to make any accord

toward a unified notation. He disapproved of their selfish desire “to set up a new method of his own” (AIMC 1920: 133). Yet another critic M. Fredilis stated at the All-India Music Conference in 1919:

The attempts to secure a satisfactory Notation have been made more numerous in India than they were in Europe, and experience shows us that instead of reaching Terra Firma we have been floundering deeper and deeper in the waves of controversy (AIMC 1920: 105).

These types of complaints commonly came from staff notation supporters, who disapproved the excess of notation systems as part of their arguments for employing the notation system backed by “international consensus.” Nevertheless, supporters of modified staff notation never worked out a unified method of modification either. Staff notation or alphabet notation, supporters of each notation maintained an unyielding attitude towards other notation systems.

### **c. Standardization Desired for Its Scientific Implications, Not Necessity**

One factor that contributed to the difficulty in reaching a consensus on notation (apart from the egos of those who devised the systems) pertains to ways in which notations were used at the time. Notation was predominantly used in textbooks, and music classes were the context in which one most frequently saw notations. In the late nineteenth to early twentieth century, music education was highly localized. The majority of music schools operated singularly, without sharing curricula or textbooks with other schools. Few music schools were affiliated with any centralized examining body, which would assign textbooks and administer standardized tests. Organized networks with such features became

prominent only in the mid-twentieth century. Though networks started in the earlier decades, they were not dominant then. In the 1900s to 1930s, music teachers would write textbooks for their particular schools and to suit their particular programs and syllabi. Thus, with a few exceptions, textbooks had rather limited ranges of circulation. Even in the case of the Gandharva Mahavidyalayas—probably the largest network of affiliated schools at the time—textbook distributions did not necessarily increase with the addition of affiliated schools. Paluskar’s disciples such as Vinayak Rao Patwardhan, Omkarnath Thakur, and B. R. Deodhar did not use their guru’s textbooks for teaching their students. Instead, they published their own textbooks that suited their particular classes. Furthermore, they wrote the textbooks using different kinds of notation. Several of Paluskar’s disciples modified the guru’s notation in some way or other. Vinayak Rao Patwardhan, for instance, transformed Paluskar’s three-stave notation into a single line notation. Nonetheless, Patwardhan kept other aspects of his guru’s notation intact, such as the signs for duration and for altered notes (Patwardhan 1928, 1930). On the other hand, Omkarnath Thakur came to use a notation system that closely resembled Bhatkhande’s, rather than his guru Paluskar’s (Rosse 1995: 168). Thus, even among schools belonging to the Gandharva Mahavidyalaya movement, textbooks were still used in local contexts, not network-wide. Moreover, the textbooks employed different notation systems. Such localized conditions of textbook and notation uses are conducive to the plurality of notation systems and likely to have made the standardization troublesome. A music teacher then would not have had much incentive for

making the effort to learn and adopt another notation system, when the one he was used to sufficed for all his needs. Music schools did not have the kind of organization that required them to coordinate teaching materials, including notation.

According to G. H. Ranade, government schools in Maharashtra did not use the same textbooks or co-ordinate teaching methods until the late 1940s. In 1948, the Music Education Committee was assigned to evaluate several factors concerning music education in the region. The list of tasks included the possibility of having a uniform notation for Indian music (Ranade 1967: 53-54). The difficulty of enforcing a standard notation lingered for many decades.

Besides being unnecessary for the immediate purposes of many music schools, it is very likely that textbooks published elsewhere using other notation systems were often unavailable. While he did not particularly associate himself with the reform movement, Krishna Rao Pandit attempted to devise a notation system. His son, L. K. Pandit, considers that Krishna Rao was a pioneer in devising a notation system. According to the son, “hardly anyone had given [notation a] serious thought” then, and Krishna Rao Pandit devised a notation around 1912, independent of other attempts (Pandit 1996: 82). From an all-India perspective, it is incorrect to say that few took notation seriously in the early 1910s. Dozens of notation systems existed in different parts of the country. Despite the situation, Krishna Rao Pandit, who lived in Gwalior, had to devise a notation of his own around 1912, which was several years before Bhatkhande introduced his notation to future instructors of the Madhav Music School in

Gwalior. The case of Krishna Rao Pandit suggests that the existent notations—though numerous and eagerly debated—were not conveniently available for everyone’s use. Though existing, they were not spread widely at the very beginning of the twentieth century.

The localized pattern of notation use provided a hostile ground for standardizing notation. It took large school networks some decades later to spread certain types of notation widely. In the latter half of the twentieth century, Bhatkhande’s notation and the Gandharva Mahavidyalaya’s notation<sup>23</sup> became the de facto standard notations. Their wide acceptance has more to do with the size of school networks than with intrinsic features of the notations. Large numbers of schools became affiliated with the Bhatkhande Vidyapith and Akhil Bharatiya Gandharva Mahavidyalaya Mandal (hereafter ABGMV Mandal). These institutions are examining bodies. Schools affiliated with them follow the same degree programs, and students take centralized exams based on the same guidelines. The affiliated schools normally share a set of textbooks too. In 1975, 111 schools were affiliated with the ABGMV Mandal; that number increased to 265 in 1985 and 690 in 1995. The number of affiliated schools seems to keep increasing, and 784 schools were affiliated with the ABGMV Mandal in 1998 (ABGMV Mandal 1998a). The size of the network provides a strong support for making the Mandal’s choice a “standard.” In the 1960s, the government funded Sangit Natak Academy created its version of standard notation to be implemented

---

<sup>23</sup> The notation currently used in Gandharva Mahavidyalayas is not the same as Paluskar’s. His original notation went through a number of modifications, and the current Gandharva Mahavidyalaya notation is basically the same as Bhatkhande’s, except for minor matters such as line breaks.

nation-wide. The attempt did not succeed, most probably because the notation did not have a large-scale school network attached to it. In sum, school networks became the driving force for standardizing notation in the latter half of the twentieth century. By spreading the same textbooks and distributing the same exams, the school networks created an environment that required a shared notation.

Around the 1910s when the standardization of notation was keenly debated at music conferences and in print media, large-scale school networks did not exist. The number of music schools had steadily increased since the 1870s, but they operated singularly. The largest networks of the time barely reached ten schools before 1920. Schools related to the Baroda Music School were below five (including the main school) at the end of the 1900s and nine at the end of the 1910s.<sup>24</sup> Similarly, the Gandharva Mahavidyalaya network had less than five schools in the 1900s and seven or eight in the 1910s. The number grew to about fifteen by the end of the 1920s. These were still small numbers—in all probability too small to affect any standardization at the pan-North Indian level. Apart from the small size, school networks before the 1930s shared only a loose sense of alliance based on teaching lineage. The schools did not have and were not trying to have common curricula or a notation system. Schools in the same network could use different textbooks and notations.<sup>25</sup> In other words, school

---

<sup>24</sup> I counted the Baroda Music School's branches and other schools established by Maula Baksh's disciples, as they are mentioned in Rosse 1995 and Thakkar 1992. There may have been more related schools that were not mentioned in those texts. On the other hand, those nine schools may not have been all functional at the same time.

<sup>25</sup> Learning from the same guru did not guarantee using the same notation. Paluskar's disciples changed the guru's notation in different ways.

networks in the first few decades of the twentieth century did not constitute definite exceptions to the highly localized pattern of notation use.

The reformist enthusiasm in the 1910s to standardize notation did not derive from a pressing need experienced at the level of music schools—the primary field of notation use. A pragmatic necessity for standardization arose only in the 1930s and 1940s, when school networks became larger and more regulated. The Gandharva Mahavidyalayas' effort to become a more organized and unified network began in 1931, when Paluskar's core disciples established the ABGMV Mandal as the regulating institution. Organized exchanges of examiners between the schools that used Bhatkhande's teaching method (in Gwalior, Lucknow, Nagpur, etc.) became apparent also in the 1930s or 1940s.

The repeated calls for a standardized notation at the All-India Music Conferences in the 1910s, therefore, had less practical reasons than ideological ones. The reformers desired a standardized notation not because music teachers needed one but rather because a scientific apparatus must be standardized. Reformist discourses commonly associated notations with science. For instance, the 1913 edition of *Who's Who in India* contained an entry on the musician called Satyabala Devi. It dubbed her “the famous scientific musician,” chiefly because she learned music with the help of notation (still a novelty at the time) and notated “4,000 pieces of classical music” (quoted in Rosse 1995: 44). The Raja of Gauripur, an active participant of the All-India Music Conferences, compared notation to a scientific apparatus and industrial device (AIMC 1920: 130-142). The above bits of discourse link notation and science directly, but notation was

also indirectly assigned the overtone of science. Most reformers conceptualized notation principally as an instrument for music education. Music education was one of the reform's most important goals, and the reformers consistently expressed that "music education" ought to entail systematic and scientific teaching methods (e.g., AIMC 1918: 4). Thus, in reformist discourses, notation was scientific by itself (comparable to a scientific tool) as well as a critical participant in the "systematic and scientific teaching of music." Reformers connected notation systems with the notion of science very widely and from various directions. Considering the lack of practical necessity and the prevalence of the idea of science, it was most likely the ideological association of notation with science that fueled the demand for a standardized notation system in the 1910s and thereabouts.

Association with science easily extended to one with progress. For many reformers, notation denoted the progress of Hindustani music, just as scientific devices would contribute to the progress of society. Most commonly, reformers considered notation to be a tool through which people could learn music faster—much more quickly than with the traditional mentor-apprentice method (e.g., Paluskar 1921a Preface, Vasaikar in AIMC 1919 Appendix B). In other words, notation helped produce musicians more efficiently. A speech by Ganpat Rao Vasaikar, *shahnai* player of the Baroda State and teacher at the Baroda Music School, illustrates the point. He wrote a textbook series *Sanai Vadan Pathmala (Lessons in Shahnai Playing)* and used it in his classes at Baroda Music School. In his 1918 speech, Vasaikar implied that the successful teaching with notation

made *shahnai*, a rather marginal instrument in classical music, a full-fledged participant in the musical march toward progress.

Like other subjects, the art of playing shahnai can be taught or learned excellently through books. I don't mean to say that relying only on books is enough. I'm saying that what one can learn in one year now with the help of books, would have been difficult to learn even in five years in the old method. Apart from misgivings about the mentor-apprentice system, wouldn't the fast-producing teaching method suitable for this age of progress? (AIMC 1919, Appendix B: v)

In Vasaikar's and other reformers' opinions, notation was not only practical but also productive.

The linking of notation and progress had a curious evolutionist variation, voiced mostly by foreign sympathizers of the reform but also accepted by some Indian reformers. The reformist historiography of Hindustani music assumed that the music declined in the past several centuries, especially in the nineteenth century. Reformers postulated several reasons for the decline. These reasons will be discussed in the Chapter 4, except for a peculiar one that is pertinent here. Some proposed that the music's decline occurred due to the lack of a notation system. For instance, the Raja of Gauripur lamented that many excellent compositions must have vanished in the course of history because of the shortage of books and treatises, in which those "excellent compositions" could have been preserved in notation. Because this "bookless" condition continued for so long, and traditional compositions were lost, the Raja claimed, "Hindu music has greatly lost its strength" (AIMC 1920: 132). In his opinion, the lack of the writing of compositions (i.e., in notation) was responsible, at least partly, for the waning of Hindustani classical music in general.

The same idea appeared more often in speeches and writings of European sympathizers who lived in India. Though they were not Indian, those sympathizers had some visibility and influence in the music reform scenes—because of their financial power, high positions in the government, or works in musicology and music journalism. One such sympathizer, Ethel Rosenthal thought it likely that “one of the causes which [had] contributed to the fall of music from its high estate [was] the absence of standard notation” (Rosenthal 1993: xviii). The Governor George Clarke expressed a similar view when he spoke at the Gandharva Mahavidyalaya, Mumbai around the new year’s day of 1911.

[M]usical evolution in India has been hampered by the want of improved methods of recording and thus of permanently preserving its forms. Until a general and thoroughly scientific system of musical notation had been arrived at, real progress was impossible in Western countries which now have rich and extensive musical literature (in “Ganranjan” 1994a: 17).

In Governor Clarke’s opinion, a notation system—standard and scientific one—was indispensable for the “real progress” of music, and the lack thereof hindered the “musical evolution in India.” Later in the speech, Governor Clarke expressed optimism for the future of Indian classical music, since the reformers had begun to work to solve the problem of notation. This speech was delivered at the annual prize-giving ceremony of the Gandharva Mahavidyalaya, Mumbai. The school’s ceremonies often attracted journalists and community leaders, as Vishnu Digambar invited famous guests to preside over the events. The speech by Governor Clarke was printed in the *Times of India*, one of the most widely read newspapers in the country. In sum, it was not uncommon to hear the view that

the lack of a (standard and scientific) notation system was to blame for the deterioration of Hindustani classical music in the past.

Clearly, the presumed correlation between the lack of notation and the decline represents the logical reverse of the more common correlation between notation and progress (If notation brings progress, the lack of notation must bring deterioration). Those who upheld this logical-reverse-view never substantiated their opinion with historical materials. The statement always remained a personal opinion with general and hypothetical supporting arguments. The idea was based solely on ideologies—evolutionism and the ideology of literacy—not history. Evolutionism dictated the key parameters of music evolution: complexity of sound, notation/literacy, organization of practitioners, the presence of scholarship, and so forth. Absence or presence of these elements determined the degree of evolution. And the ideology of literacy pronounced that literacy was inherently better and more evolved than orality. The allegedly seminal elements of music evolution, nevertheless, consisted of elements that were deemed crucial in the history of European classical music. In other words, the history of European classical music was assumed to be the model of evolution of all musics. Thus placing European classical music at the pinnacle of all musics, music evolutionism was a discourse of cultural imperialism, sometimes carried by agents of political imperialism (such as Governor Clarke or Claude Hill). Behind a simple statement that the lack of notation effected Hindustani music's decline lurked assumptions and subtexts of Eurocentric evolutionist thought and European cultural supremacy.

The connotation of cultural imperialism notwithstanding, Hindustani music reformers did not question the view that faulted the lack of notation for the music's decline. They themselves may not have voiced the opinion, but they did not reject the idea and even tried to circulate it among the public. As mentioned earlier, *The Times of India* printed Governor Clarke's speech in full. Vishnu Digambar Paluskar often published high government officials' speeches that were delivered at his schools, even when the speeches' contents included similarly Euro-cultural imperialist views (e.g., GMV 1913/4). One can only assume that the Indian reformers and journalists did not consider the speeches to be of any threat when they published them—although a statement that explained Indian music's decline with the lack of notation was dipped in European cultural imperialism. It was probably because the reformist discourse correlated notation so strongly with progress that the logical flipside passed as natural, or at least not so strange an idea.

In this chapter I have discussed that “science” was one of the central controlling ideas of the music reform movement. The notion of science appeared anywhere: the name of a school, the principle of music education, or as the synonym of music theory. Reformers expected that scientific approaches would solve many problems: (a) scientific approaches would draw the educated segment of society to studying Hindustani classical music and (b) such approaches also would bring social esteem to the music. In particular, (c) reformers linked the idea of science with having a standard notation system. Being a scientific device,

notation was presumed to propel progress. The reformist urge in the 1910s to standardize notations was the derivative of the notion of science. Reformers aimed to standardize other aspects of Hindustani music too. As the reformers sought to standardize the definition and treatment of ragas, they also endeavored to standardize notation. Since a pressing and practical need to standardize notation was lacking at that point, it is more likely that the reformers' effort for standardization derived from the ideology of science delineating that a scientific device must be standardized.

### **Chapter 3. Classicism and Devotionalism**

The reformers' most important aim was that the general public should learn to appreciate Hindustani classical music. In reformist discourses, such appreciation was necessary if India was to grow into a civilized nation; such appreciation was also necessary to avoid the music's further deterioration (and possible extinction). Concomitant to this picture of classical music and a civilized nation was a set of characteristics that such a nation's classical music (and music culture) should have. For one, the music had to be "scientific," as discussed in the preceding chapter. Hindustani music needed to be studied and taught systematically and scientifically to become truly a civilized nation's music. In addition, the music had to qualify as a "high art." That is, the music must exhibit profound characteristics and be devoid of profanity. In the common parlance of reformist discourse, high art or fine art was "not mere entertainment," "not only performed for money," especially it was "not for sensual pleasure." High art must have transcendental values, not mere erotic titillation. It must have a good taste, not cheap or vulgar ones. High art must be uplifting and enlightening. The reformers repeatedly articulated that Hindustani classical music was high art.

## 1. HIGH ART

In most formal speeches given at music conferences or school ceremonies, the speakers stated that music was an uplifting or ennobling art. All types of speakers uttered the same statement: certainly music reformers, but also judges, aristocrats, professors, and government officials who supported and participated in the reform movement. Typically, speakers used terms such as “ennobling,” “uplifting,” “enlightening,” or “nurturing” for the soul and intellect. At the First All-India Music Conference in 1916, for instance, K. B. Devatia, a music theorist, talked of “*educative and ennobling influence of music*” (AIMC 1918: 34). Minister of Education of the Baroda State proclaimed, “Music, like painting, sculpture and poetry, *tends to refine, to civilize and to exalt the intellectual faculties*” (AIMC 1918: 8). Speaker after speaker sounded a similar note at this particular conference. Another speaker, Premvallabh Joshi, a science professor at the Government College in Ajmer, stated that music had an important role to play in general education because it had civilizing effects. In his view, music was conducive to “*harmonious development of mental and emotional faculties,*” which he considered to be the ultimate purpose of all education. Music was valuable for the purpose because studying arts facilitated people to “*realise the beauty of truth and order, and of good and right.*” In the speaker’s opinion, music in particular had the educational values of “soften[ing] the feelings, curb[ing] the passions and improv[ing] the temper of children” (AIMC 1918: 44). The same attitude continued in the successive conferences in late 1910s. Music “*ennobles and cheers the mind,*” wrote K. N. Shivapuri, Joint Secretary of the Second

Conference (AIMC 1919: ii). Shivendranath Basu, who organized the Third Conference in Varanasi, characterized music as the “most ancient, most valuable, and *most humanizing and soul-elevating art*” (AIMC 1919 Appendix C, ii. AIMC 1920: 8).<sup>1</sup>

In addition to uplifting and civilizing effects, reformers assigned spirituality, authenticity, and profundity to Hindustani classical music. The keynote speaker and General Secretary of the First All-India Music Conference, S. L. Joshi, wrote the following as his model of how things ideally would be.

Plato’s old programme of education “Music for the soul and gymnastics for the body” ... emphasised the *great importance of music in the spiritual development of life*. Every student of India’s history knows that our ancestors put a great stress on this point... (AIMC 1918: 1-2).

A couple of pages later, he lamented that there was an “immense amount of vulgarity” in music in the current surrounding and proclaimed:

We need to train ... men and women who will bring the people out of the desert of the mediocre and *cheap* in [the] art [that] gives *profoundest expression to the spirit of Indian life*, into a land of increasing fertility and refreshment (AIMC 1918: 3-4).

In Joshi’s opinion quoted above, music was significant primarily because it expressed and benefited the “spirit” of individual and national lives. That is, music was thought to have links to the innermost or profoundest core of the self—of both a person and a nation. In other words, because music had access to the profoundest self, music was authentic to individuals and nations. As a corollary,

---

<sup>1</sup> Statements about music’s uplifting quality easily turned into statements about improving character (or emotional and intellectual faculties). The theme of character was a prevalent concern in the early twentieth century and was part of being “civilized.” I discuss only the issue of uplift and not that of character.

music became the sign of such national and personal authenticity. Consequently, Joshi implicitly denied that music was an entertainment or a craft, at least not primarily so.

The idea that music was uplifting and ennobling remained highly visible in later generations of reformers' speeches, lectures, and articles well into the mid-twentieth century—until the 1940s and beyond. Bhatkhande's protégé S. N. Ratanjankar gave numerous talks on the radio and lectures at various institutions. According to Sumati Mutatkar, his lectures had the same pattern whenever she heard them during the 1940s, when she was his student.

He was respected highly as a great musician and musicologist, and an advocate of music. So, in his lectures whenever—I have heard many—at first, he used to dwell upon the great divine quality of music, and how music uplifts the personality of a person, and so music is great, and so music should be spread over, everyone should learn music, and everyone should learn to enjoy music (Mutatkar 1998a).

Hindustani classical music's virtues and its ability to uplift learners constituted important themes in Ratanjankar's speeches. The idea that the music was uplifting and ennobling impressed Mutatkar as an aspiring student. Certain other themes of reformist discourse waned after the mid-twentieth century. The ideology of fine art, on the other hand, remains widespread. It manifests in people's viewing classical music as an art capable of uplifting and ennobling the soul and character of a person. More generally, the ideology of fine art is discernible in people's thinking that classical music stands for a high social accomplishment.

Shanno Khurana started to learn Hindustani classical music during the reform years and, like Mutatkar, later studied with S. N. Ratanjankar. Khurana's

account of the reform movement indicates that the idea of high art (as opposed to cheap entertainment or mere livelihood) endured in the later generation of reform followers. Her narrative of the reform's history starts with the pre-reform predicament. Since the Mughal period, music became alienated from respectable families, and female musicians were usually prostitutes. Indian people did not let their children learn music because it was associated with the courtesan class. To add to this, music offered no scope of earning a decent living, and the British did not encourage it. V. N. Bhatkhande and Vishnu Digambar Paluskar intervened to change the condition.

They felt that *music is an art*. It's a science. It's an art. We should encourage and we should propagate this music, ... so that respectable girls ... and boys would come and learn. ... So, these institutions [i.e., music schools] came up [to teach them]. ... When they started these institutions, people began to realize that "No, it's not so bad as all that." [They would say,] "At least let the children take up music as a hobby, because music is something [that] teaches you so many things." They began to realize that music is *not something cheap*. *Classical music is something more*. Gradually, they were coming out of those influences [in] their ideas (Khurana 1998).

In Khurana's portrayal above, the significant breakthrough came with the idea of art: that Hindustani classical music was a high art or fine art. The achievements of Paluskar and Bhatkhande were buttressed by this idea, and the end result of the reform manifested in the general public's changing their opinion about classical music and accepting it on the basis of its being a fine art—nurturing and enlightening ("teach many things") as well as noble and refined ("not cheap," "something more"). The notion of fine art is one of the most lasting themes of

reformist discourses. It is telling that Khurana chose to discuss the reform movement using the idea of fine art as the central factor.

## 2. DIVINE ART

Besides “high art,” reformers frequently used the terms “divine art” and “sacred art” to characterize Hindustani classical music, and they did so in all forms of discourse—books, magazines, newspapers, live speeches and lectures, or radio talks. The idea was prevalent during the reform years. In 1901, the newspaper *Tribune* reported a speech by the famous social reformer Din Dayal Sharma. At a ceremony probably related to the opening of the first Gandharva Mahavidyalaya in Punjab, he reportedly talked of “the deplorable decline in the *divine art* in this [Punjab] Province” (in Rosse 1995: 153). About a decade later, the *Times of India* (Bombay) January 4, 1911 reported a speech that Judge Narayan Chandavarkar delivered at the Gandharva Mahavidyalaya Mumbai, where he was invited as a guest speaker for the prize ceremony. According to the *Times*, Judge Chandavarkar emphasized “the necessity of developing the *devotional side* of Indian music,” dwelling on the topic for relatively a long time. In his opinion, the “true ideal” of music was a state in which the music was “developed in the spirit of religion and true devotion.” He contrasted this ideal to a situation in which music was “developed only for the purpose of sensuous enjoyment”—an allusion that everyone would understand as referring to courtesans and hereditary musicians in the immediate past (“Ganranjan” 1994a: 16). The *Times of India* then quoted the speech of the Governor George Clarke

who was the main guest of the ceremony. Part of his speech was also about the spiritual virtue of music.<sup>2</sup>

Nothing is being calculated to lift us above the mechanical and material aspects of our lives, to speak straight to the *sense of the divine* than good music. It has been said that the ancient Greeks, who were in many respects a wise people, made a point of teaching their children music, because they believed that it helped them ... to see the beauty of order, the usefulness of rule and *the divinity of law* (“Ganranjan” 1994b: 25).

Admittedly, Judge Chandavarkar and Governor Clarke were not music reformers. Nevertheless, associating music with divinity, as they did, was extremely common in all groups—musicians, musicologists, aficionados, or notable guests. The phrases “divine art” and “sacred art” appeared in many contexts. Indeed, Judge Chandavarkar and Governor Clarke may have dwelt on the issue of the divine because they had already known that their host, Vishnu Digambar Paluskar, was most interested in the spiritual and devotional aspect of music.

Speeches at the All-India Music Conferences provided many occasions for the attendees to hear similar phrases. For instance, the report of the First All-India Music Conference in 1916 describes one of the concluding statements delivered by a speaker named Mohanlal from Alwar.

[He] said that this attempt by the Indian Nation to revive their ancient heritage of music was an important and promising presage of a hopeful future for the *divine art*. He exhorted the audience to remember that it was the *sacred duty* of each and every one of them to prevent it from degenerating (AIMC 1918: 58).

---

<sup>2</sup> Many formal speeches closely resembled one another in content. That is, most speakers used some from a set of stock topics that include Hindustani music’s decay, its spirituality, and so forth.

A few years later at the Third All-India Music Conference, the Joint Secretary of the conference Sitaram Sah summarized results of the First and Second All-India Music Conferences. In the *Report*, he wrote that one of the achievements was the resolution “to open an academy for the study of that *Divine art*” (AIMC 1920: 4). During the Third Conference, Sivendranath Basu stated that he prepared a chart to compare notation in order to “stimulate the interests of ... lovers and scholars of [the] *sacred art*” (AIMC 1920: 11). At the end of the Third Conference *Report*, Basu praised volunteers who assisted the conference for their hard work. Expressing his gratitude to the volunteers, he wrote, “Their keen interest in the uplift of the *Sacred Art* is enough to predict the success of this grand cause in the near future” (AIMC 1920: 67). Also at the Third All-India Music Conference, Prabhat Chandra Barua, the Raja of Gauripur, bemoaned in his speech that “*blessed Beena*<sup>3</sup> of beauty divine of Mother Sree Sarada [i.e., Goddess Saraswati]” had fallen in the hands of professional musicians (AIMC 1920: 131). In other words, the terms “divine art” and “sacred art” were synonyms of Hindustani classical music. The association of music and the divine was so taken for granted that a reformer could use the phrase “divine music” without any relevant context in the rest of his speech. Given the prevalent implication of divinity, it is not surprising that reformers frequently compared their movement to religious missions. At the Third All-India Music Conference in 1919, Sri Krishna Joshi presented his vision of the proposed Academy of Music. He envisioned a school that would produce music teachers with culture and character, who would

---

<sup>3</sup> “*Beena*” or *vina* refers to a lute-type string instrument. In iconography, the Goddess Saraswati carries this instrument.

be “*Missionaries of Music for establishing Musical Institutions all over the country*” (AIMC 1920: 118, original emphases). It is well known that Vishnu Digambar liked to call his students “missionaries,” and had in mind Christian missions as a model for his movement (e.g., Athavale 1967, Deodar 1971, Rosse 1995).

Reform followers perpetuated the reform’s religious connotation by likening the movement to missions and using religiously loaded vocabulary when writing its history. Recent publications continue to use such terms as “saviors” or “missionary” to refer to Paluskar and Bhatkhande. Susheela Misra, a prolific and influential writer on the reform movement, characterized Paluskar’s work as “spreading the *gospel* of music” (Misra 1990: 183). Similarly, Mohan Nadkarni wrote that to Paluskar, music “was the *gospel* of God.” Nadkarni portrays Paluskar as a preacher.

He *preached* [the gospel] through his own devotional compositions that were full of surrender to the Supreme—just the kind of music that appealed to an enslaved nation (Nadkarni 1982a: 24).

Accounts of Paluskar’s life and work almost always contain religious references. Misra reports that Paluskar was called the “Luther of Indian music” in the mid-twentieth century, though the term fell out of use in the later decades (Misra 1968). References to mission and religion extend to accounts of Paluskar’s students. For instance, Shankar Rao Vyas, one of Paluskar’s core disciples, was dubbed “a music *missionary* and *devotee* of Paluskar,” in reference to Vyas’s establishing his own music schools and teaching for many years (Misra 1990: 175).

Discourse was not the only area in which reformers deployed images of religion. Reformist music schools had regular reminders of religion in the schools' daily operations. Typically, the schools celebrated Hindu religious festivals. For instance, Gandharva Mahavidyalayas under Paluskar's principalship celebrated festivals such as *Diwali*, *Basant Panchmi*, and *Shiv-ratri*, among others. On *Shiv-ratri*, for instance, the school was closed and no classes took place. Instead, the school hosted a *hari-kirtan* performance (devotional songs and discourses) in the evening, for the sake of students and the surrounding community (SAP 3(2): 30, 32). The Marris College of Music too regularly celebrated *Krishna Jayanti*, *Krishna Ashtami*, *Basant Panchmi*, and many other religious festivals. On those occasions, they organized gatherings in which students and teachers sang together (Bhat, S.C.R. 1998b). Undoubtedly, they must have performed devotional repertoires suitable to the particular occasion. These festive events were apparent ways in which reformers demonstrated the link between Hindustani music and divinity.

Apart from festivities, reformist schools organized weekly or even daily reminders of the music's connection to the divine. For instance, at the Banaras Hindu University's Faculty of Arts under Omkarnath Thakur—one of Paluskar's main disciples—students attended a daily prayer at six o'clock. All students were expected to attend, though they were never forced to. The group prayer consisted of singing *bhajans* (devotional songs) as well as some Sanskrit verses taken from

the Vedas and *Gita Govinda*.<sup>4</sup> Omkarnath Thakur set the verses to music himself. Students sang these devotional verses at the daily prayer sessions and at all school events (Bhatt, B. 1998). As the case of Omkarnath Thakur indicates, reformers frequently set religious texts to Hindustani classical ragas and taught the compositions to students. Paluskar set the famous prayer “Jaya Jagadisha Hare” to raga Bilahari and taught the song to his disciples. By the mid-twentieth century, the song was sung at the beginning of all public performances of his followers or performances they organized (Ratanjankar 1992: 47). Reformist schools also used textbooks that contained many songs with religious texts. I will discuss the issue of lyrics in the next section. In this section, it suffices to say that life at a reformist school confirmed and reinforced the idea that Hindustani classical music was linked to religion and divinity, because the schools officially celebrated religious festivals, organized prayer sessions, and had students sing devotional songs for school events of all kinds.

Gandharva Mahavidyalayas under Vishnu Digambar were extreme examples of reformist schools exhibiting the music’s connection with religion, in both discourse and action. To begin with, the name of the school itself evokes divinity, as Gandharva is a heavenly musician, a demigod of the heaven of Indra (McGregor ed. 1993: 249). The schools’ own newsletters referred to the school as “Gandharva Ashram” (*ashram* means a sacred place where devotees live) instead of “Gandharva Mahavidyalaya” (e.g., SAP 3(2): 30). The school’s

---

<sup>4</sup> Verses of *Gita Govinda* (12<sup>th</sup> century) concern the Lord Krishna and his consort Radha. Regardless of its erotic content, the poetry of *Gita Govinda* is generally considered to be profoundly religious (Embree 1988: 261-2).

newsletters recurrently carried articles that dealt with the divine nature of music (e.g., GMV 1(8)). Since the Gandharva Mahavidyalayas' newsletters had subscriptions from outside the schools, they would have contributed to impress the idea of music and divinity upon supporters outside of the schools in addition to the students.

It was customary for a reformist school to invite performing artists to give performances at the school. Such occasions provided students and the local community opportunities to listen to famous musicians or different musicians. Guest artists generally meant classical musicians. However, Paluskar invited to his schools *kirtan* (devotional song) singers as well as classical musicians (SAP 4(2): 27). As for teaching materials, the entire five-year course for the first degree, Praveshika, was taught with songs of religious nature, mostly *bhajans* by saint-poets such as Tulsi Das, Sur Das, Kabir.<sup>5</sup> In life at school, students gathered to pray twice a day, before regular classes started in the morning and in the evening. Besides, all events connected to the school had to start with a prayer (GM 1913: 2-3). Personally, Paluskar cultivated the image of saintliness. His students would call him “Maharaj”—a title used for saints as well as ruling aristocrats. The saintly image became very prominent after Paluskar adopted long beard and saffron robes and gave lectures on *Ramayana* regularly (e.g., Deshpande 1989: 162). These events and Paluskar's transformation into a “saint” occurred from the 1910s to early 1920s. B. R. Deodhar—one of Paluskar's later disciples—recalls that the Gandharva Mahavidyalaya started to resemble a

---

<sup>5</sup> Based on the school report (1913) as well as songs included in the two sets of textbooks for the introductory class, *Sangit Bal-bodh* and *Sangit Bal-prakash* (Paluskar ca. 1902 and 1904).

monastery rather than a music school in the early 1920s (Purohit 1988: 872).<sup>6</sup> Paluskar's Gandharva Mahavidyalayas are extreme examples. Nevertheless, in varied degrees, all reformist schools affirmed music's affinity to religion through festive celebrations, school events and ceremonies, and the choice of songs that were taught and learned.

Reformist discourses highlighted that the spiritual aspect of music belonged to the reform's territory. The issue of the music-divinity connection often defined the reform efforts in contrast to hereditary musicians, who allegedly performed "only for money" or "for mere sensual pleasure" and neglected the religious side of music. For instance, a guest speaker at the Gandharva Mahavidyalaya Mumbai praised Paluskar for his work on the school, especially for his determination to "give the development of music a devotional turn" ("Ganranjan" 1994a: 16). The *Times of India* reported the speech in the following manner.

It had been remarked that Indian music had for centuries fallen into the hands of an *unfortunate class*, that it ought to be *rescued* from it, and that Indian ladies ought to take it up and elevate it to the dignity which it deserved. Music, when it was only developed only for the purpose of sensuous enjoyment fell short of the true ideal it should be developed in the spirit of religion and true devotion ("Ganranjan" 1994a: 16).

The speaker, a high-ranking judge, pointed out that "the unfortunate class" of musicians developed music "only for the purpose of sensual enjoyment." By "the unfortunate class," he evidently meant professional musicians, especially female

---

<sup>6</sup> After his Gandharva Mahavidyalaya Mumbai closed for financial reasons in the early 1920s, Paluskar relocated to Nasik, where he continued his music press and where his wife later opened a music school. The city of Nasik also has a strong religious connotation. Nasik is a holy city, where over a third of its population were Brahmans serving temples and *ghats* around the turn of the century (Bayly 1998: 109).

ones. In the above speech, “rescuing” Hindustani classical music from those musicians is a process equivalent to developing music “in the spirit of religion and devotion.” In other words, Paluskar’s nurturing the spiritual side of music was placed in contrast to professional musicians’ neglecting spirituality, because of their acquiescence to sensual entertainment. Reformist discourses such as this one portrayed spiritual and devotional aspects of music as characteristic of the reform movement and lacking in the “other” side of hereditary musicians.

Reformist discourses commonly expressed the conviction that hereditary musicians had deserted the devotional side of Hindustani classical music. Bhatkhande repeatedly disparaged professional musicians for treating music as “*merely a means for bread-winning*” (e.g., in AIMC 1920: 155). Similarly, musicologist and Sanskrit scholar Srinivas Pandeya claimed that the “prostitutes and professionals,” who dominated Hindustani classical music in the past, had only one aim: “to please the audience and *make their living out of it.*” He blamed this attitude for the loss of spiritual meaning in Hindustani classical music. To Pandeya, music cultivated for the salvation of the soul was the only “real music.” Despite his bemoaning, he expressed his hope that the lamentable condition would reverse through efforts of the reform movement and the “intelligent public’s” interest in the music (AIMC 1919: 52). Here again, the spiritual aspect of music was portrayed as something of a monopoly of the reform movement and lacking on the side of professional musicians.

Followers of the reform movement perpetuated the reformist premise by repeating that the reformers had reintroduced the music’s devotional aspect,

which was lacking in the period before the reform. In fact, I find more examples of such statements among late-twentieth-century writings about the reform than among the reformers' own speeches and articles in the early twentieth century. In his contribution to the commemorative volume dedicated to Paluskar, Vishwanath Jalan praised Paluskar for having merged music with the spiritual. Jalan preached how spirituality was a significant part of (classical) music and emphasized the importance of maintaining the "trinity" of music, literature, and devotion together. In Jalan's view, that was precisely what Paluskar achieved, as he upheld a spiritual attitude and sang devotional poetry in proper Hindustani classical music (ABGMV Mandal 1974: 71). Another reform follower, "Kaka" Kolelkar, recollected an occasion in which Paluskar performed at a college. In his interpretation of the event, Paluskar impressed on the hosting students and other listeners that "music was *not a thing of sensuality but was a form of devotion* (ABGMV Mandal 1974: 57). While describing the pre-reform condition of classical music, V. R. Athavale assumed that the "devotional aspect of music had disappeared" in North India and the music was merely "employed for sensuous enjoyment." He credited Paluskar for breaking this state, because Paluskar introduced devotional and literary song texts (Athavale 1973: 147-8). To cite one more example, M. M. Thakkar wrote that before the reform movement, "music was relegated to *mere entertainment*, and people talked ill of its followers," largely because of "prostitutes" and their entourage who occupied the place of prominence. Thakkar credited Maula Baksh, Bhatkhande, and Paluskar for changing the situation. The three reformers selected respectable and devotional

songs for teaching music, and they made music “again a part of common man’s life” (Thakkar 1992: 16). The above quotations all recapitulate the reformist contention that the reform movement reintroduced the devotional aspect of Hindustani classical music while it was “mere entertainment” performed “only for money” among hereditary musicians in the pre-reform period.

The reformist discourses and the later writers’ compliance notwithstanding, classical music’s connection with divinity and religion was not limited to reform circles. The connection was certainly not “lost” before the appearance of reformers such as Paluskar. Nor were reformers the first ones to articulate the notion of divinity in music in the modern times. On the contrary, the classical music’s association with religion and spirituality was ubiquitous. Any music school, not only those run by reformers, could have made their students sing religious songs; and any school, not only music schools, would have celebrated religious festivals.<sup>7</sup> Among the aristocratic or wealthy households, it was customary to have classical singers perform at private religious ceremonies and festivities. When he was employed at the Baroda court in the early twentieth century, the hereditary master Faiyaz Khan used to sing every Thursday at a place called Kriti Mandir, which functioned as the memorial “temple” of the Maharaja’s family in the Baroda State (Kelkar 1998). B. R. Deodhar recalls listening to another famous hereditary master, Alladiya Khan in the 1900s or 1910s. In the region he lived, a wealthy family regularly hosted Alladiya Khan’s

---

<sup>7</sup> Classical music’s connection with divinity was acted out at any music school in early to mid-twentieth century, not only in reformist schools. At Shankar Gandharva Vidyalaya in Gwalior, Krishna Rao Pandit held regular Thursday concerts, and these concerts began with his honoring Saraswati and teachers of the gharana. *Prasad* (offerings to the deity) would be distributed at the end of the concerts (Pandit 1996: 80-81).

performance on the occasion of Ganapati festival (i.e., religious festivity dedicated to the god Ganesh). Around the turn of the century, when Alladiya Khan was employed at the Kolhapur court, his duties included singing twice a week at the Bhavani Temple (dedicated to goddess Parvati) and on special religious occasions such as the *Navratri* festival (Deodhar 1993: 31-32). Muslim hereditary musicians also performed at rites of passage such as the sacred thread initiation ceremony for Brahman boys (Deodhar 1993: 146). From these and many other examples, it is evident that Hindustani classical music was commonly tied to religious occasions among hereditary musicians too. In addition, the singers' being Muslims did not seem to have posed an obstacle to Hindustani classical music's association with Hindu divinity and spirituality.

Moreover, Hindustani classical music's affinity to the divine was not limited to Hinduism and was applicable to other religions, including Islam. The above-mentioned artists would also sing at Muslim saints' mausoleums on festive occasions. Abdul Karim Khan, for instance, consistently performed at the annual festival of the shrine dedicated to a Muslim saint called Khwaja Mirasaheb (Deodhar 1993 146-7). According to Pradyot Coomar Tagore, not only male musicians but also courtesan artists were allowed to perform at religious places. Tagore wrote:

We shall be interested to know why these ladies of easy virtue, both Hindu and Mahomedan, are allowed to sing and dance at *Dargahs* [shrines], which are also regarded as places of worship (Tagore, P. C. 1926: 66).

Tagore's writing from which the above passage was taken urged his readers to recognize that (classical) music was sacred for Muslims too. (The book was entitled *Divine Music before Divine Mosques*.)

Reformist discourses alleged that hereditary musicians lacked spiritual, devotional approaches toward the music, treating it merely as an entertainment or a means of livelihood. On the other hand, reformers argued that they would resuscitate the spiritual meaning of Hindustani classical music. Notwithstanding, as the above examples indicate, hereditary musicians linked Hindustani classical music to religion too. They performed for both Hindu deities and Muslim saints during festivals and rites of passage. The music's associations with religion, spirituality, and devotion were much more widespread among hereditary artists than the reformist discourse admitted. There was more than enough evidence that artists from professional communities had their ways of regarding the music in relation to divinity. Many reformers must have known the situation, despite the words of others who wrote and spoke otherwise.

In addition to performing during religious occasions, musicians also had personal ways to express devotion through making music. Sumati Mutatkar recalls that the hereditary master of Agra gharana Vilayat Hussain Khan, one of her teachers, used to call music a divine art, just as reformers did (Mutatkar 1998b). In his book, Vilayat Hussain Khan wrote of music's sacredness from the viewpoint of Islam. He disputed the Orthodox Islam's view on music: that music was sinful. He considered this belief baseless, without any evidence in the scriptures. Rather, he continued, the Islamic tradition included numerous

anecdotes that demonstrated how God, saints, and apostles had used music or enjoyed music. For instance, when Adam's soul showed reluctance to go into the narrow mold of human body, God lured him into doing so by playing music. Music pleased even the Lord Doalam many a time. After the Eid prayer in certain year, for instance, he is said to have enjoyed singing and dancing. Enumerating such anecdotes, Vilayat Hussain Khan maintained that music could only be considered sacred if such stories were passed on in the Muslim tradition (Khan 1959: 19-22).

Another hereditary musician contemporary to the reform movement was Mushtaq Hussain Khan of Rampur-Sahaswan gharana. His case also attests that musicians from professional communities coupled Hindustani classical music with divinity. Mushtaq Hussain Khan used to say that sound is God, Allah. In Sumati Mutatkar's recollection, his attitude toward singing was highly devotional.

He said ... sound (*sur*) is God—Allah. Sound (*sur*) is neither Hindu nor Muslim, nor [is it] Sikh or Christian. *Sur* is verily Allah—God. He used to speak like this. ... He said that with such conviction! (Mutatkar 1998b)

Also, he told her that singing *alap* (introductory free-rhythm section) was like calling Allah. To him, the vowel [a:] that a singer utters in *alap* stood for the imperative “come,” also pronounced [a:] in Hindi. Thus, he said, one could call God by singing *alap*, pronouncing “Come, Allah, come.”<sup>8</sup> In fact, according to the maestro, one could call any deity with *alap*. Depending on the deity one worshiped, one could sing in *alap*, “Come Allah, come to me” or “Come, Shri

---

<sup>8</sup> Not only do the vowel [a:] in *alap* and the word “ā” (the imperative “come”) coincide in pronunciation, the two words rhyme with “Allah” too.

Ram, come to me.” Mushtaq Hussain Khan was immersed in spiritual matters (Mutatkar 1998b). Shanno Khurana, who studied with Mushtaq Hussain Khan extensively, recalls his reaction when she declined to sing *ghazal*.<sup>9</sup> When she was young, her father forbade his children to sing *ghazal* because it dealt with love (*ishq*=romantic love). Khurana continued to avoid *ghazal* in her adulthood. When Mushtaq Hussain Khan learned the reason of her refusal to sing *ghazal*, he asked her, “So can’t you have love (*ishq*) with Allah?” He believed that *ishq* could be interpreted in other ways than the humanly and amorous kind of love. *Ishq* could be love and communion with God (Khurana 1998).<sup>10</sup>

The above examples demonstrate that a devotional approach to music was not alien to hereditary musicians. The reformist assertion that hereditary musicians forsook spiritual meaning was not entirely correct—if not entirely incorrect. Period sources and current conditions suggest that music’s association with the divine constituted a fundamental element of Hindustani music culture, at least for those who were inside the music culture (as a performer or a patron). Despite the reformist discourses, it is more realistic to think that devotional significance of music was expressed and perceived among all types of musicians and patrons—Hindu or Muslim, Sikh or Jain, hereditary, non-hereditary, or semi-

---

<sup>9</sup> *Ghazal* is a genre of songs whose texts conform to a certain type of Urdu couplets, which is also called *ghazal*. Topics of this form of poetry often relate to romantic/erotic love (*ishq*).

<sup>10</sup> Interestingly, musicians used the idea of devotion in music for different ends. Like Mushtaq Hussain Khan’s interpretation of *ghazal* lyrics here, Naina Devi—renowned *thumri* singer—gave devotional interpretations to amorous *thumri* lyrics. Her religiously tinged interpretation helped bring the genre *thumri* into the mainstream in the mid- to late twentieth century. On the other hand, Pradyot Coomar Tagore utilized the association of music and divinity to entreat communal harmony when Hindu-Muslim communal conflict was on the rise in the mid-1920s. P. C. Tagore wrote and circulated a book entitled *Divine Music before Divine Mosques*, whose message was, in sum, that Muslims too considered music divine. It is curious that the idea of having divine music was meant to bridge the gap between “us” and “them” (Tagore, P. C. 1926).

hereditary. Though reformers claimed to have reinstated a spiritual meaning that had been abandoned, they did not introduce any new or renewed concept into the Hindustani music culture. Yet, the reformers' version of the discourse of divine art differed from the traditional one in a few important aspects.

First, the reformers directed the discourse of divine art to those who were outside of the Hindustani classical music culture. This would include interested general public—the reform's target population—as well as potential patrons and collaborators of the reform. When turned toward outsiders, ideas such as the devotional aspect and religious significance of music would become matters of prestige as well as (if not more than) matters of personal approach toward the music. From an outsiders' point of view, the notion of the divine art would bring moral and social credibility to Hindustani classical music. The music became more acceptable and even attractive when it had religious denotations.<sup>11</sup> In this context, it was secondary that the notion of divine art could guide one's attitude toward music making. In other words, in this conventional formulation, the significance of the notion of divine art rested in areas of personal approaches toward the music, affecting a musician in one way or other as he expressed and perceived music. The conventional version had a more private meaning than the reformist version. In the way reformers used the notion of divine art, the notion's main effect was the legitimization of Hindustani classical music, especially for outsiders. The reformers bemoaned the lack of devotional meaning and proposed

---

<sup>11</sup> Indeed, Paluskar occasionally put religion in the foreground purposely to attract the public. When the first Gandharva Mahavidyalaya opened but students did not come, Paluskar built a temple in the school's premise in order to attract students and guardians of potential students (Misra 1990: 177).

that they resuscitate it so that the general public could approve and appreciate the music. Thus the reformist notion of divine art was tied to the public approval of Hindustani classical music. I do not deny that reformers too drew personal meanings from the notion of divine music. Rather, I intend to say that unlike the more conventional interpretation that could have been held by any kind of musician (hereditary, reformist, or non-allied), the reformist version of the notion involved a “new” meaning that only pertained to the context in which the general public was courted to learn the classical music. That is, the reformist discourse of divine art did have a foundation in the widely spread idea of music-divinity connection. Nonetheless, the reformist version was not the same as the latter, because it introduced the meanings of social credibility and public approval.

Second, the reformist discourse differed from the more conventional notion of divine art in that the reformist version rendered the spiritual meaning of music incompatible with sensual enjoyment, pleasing the audience, or earning livelihood. They were incompatible because reformist discourses employed the term “devotional” as the opposite of those other purposes of making music. The following passage demonstrates that the idea of incompatibility between spirituality and pleasure became widespread in decades after the reform.

[O]ur music could survive because of its association with the religion and day-to-day life of the people. Another important factor ... was the patronage it used to receive from the old princely order. Such patronage was however either for pleasure or merely for a show and regal prestige. It did not spring from any real love for the art or any higher motive such as providing nurture for the spirit of man... (Ranade 1967: 32-33).

I discussed earlier that hereditary musicians too connected Hindustani classical music with religion and the divine. In contrast to reformers, hereditary musicians

who did so did not necessarily consider that spiritual meaning conflicted with entertainment or monetary compensation. Vilayat Hussain Khan regarded music divine and sacred (discussed above). At the same time, he was also very realistic about what the notion of divine art meant. His student Sumati Mutatkar narrated his attitude.

[He used to talk of the divine art.] But he said that it depends on the musician (Laugh). It depends on how you look at it, how you accept it, and how you deal with it. ... He said, "I would not say that all musicians are great and near God. It is not like that. But some of them reached that state, where they were really like saints." So, music is capable of uplifting you, but ... not automatically. It depends on your own approach. He [also] said, "We are people of this world. Living in this world, we have families. So, we have to earn money by music." He was quite clear [about] it. "It is a profession. This is a means of livelihood. But we cannot sell our music like a commodity and commercialize it totally" (Mutatkar 1998b).

In the second half of the quotation, Vilayat Hussain Khan's stance seems to conform to the stereotype of hereditary musicians who regarded music "merely" as the means of livelihood. His stance differed from the reformist stereotype, however, in that seeing music as a profession did not conflict with a religious or devotional view of music. They were not mutually exclusive for him.

Shanno Khurana, a renowned vocalist, remembers different attitudes that her two gurus had—Mushtaq Hussain Khan, who taught her the art of singing, and Thakur Jaidev Singh, who guided her in the academic side of music. Mushtaq Hussain Khan was a vocalist from a hereditary family, representing the Rampur-Sehaswan gharana. Thakur Jaidev Singh, on the other hand, was a

scholar and an influential participant of the reform movement.<sup>12</sup> According to Khurana, Thakur Jaidev Singh held the opinion that one should first satisfy oneself with the music. He regularly said that music was first and foremost for self-gratification. Being able to give the pleasure to others would be an agreeable but secondary matter. The other teacher, Mushtaq Hussain Khan had a very different attitude. He considered it very important to have an ability to please others. One certainly had to gratify oneself. Yet, to be a professional, one must go beyond that; one ought to be capable of delighting audiences. He used to tell Khurana that a singer ought to know all genres of vocal music. Metaphorically speaking, a singer must have a “big bag” which contained everything—all types of songs such as *khyal*, *dhrupad*, *dhamar*, *tarana*, *tappa*, *thumri*, *dadra*, *ghazal*, *bhajan*, *kajri*, *chaiti* and more. All these “goodies” must be inside the “big bag” so that the singer could readily pull out whatever was needed for the moment and sing it. Khurana attributes this know-all approach of her teacher to the older professional musicians’ need to please their aristocratic patrons. Mushtaq Hussain Khan had served as a court musician of the Rampur State for forty years. In her view, a court musician of the earlier era could not decline to sing anything that his patron requested. Such a refusal could have meant the loss of an extremely pricey prize—hundreds or thousands of rupees (in those days’ prices), for example. A court singer had to sing anything promptly to satisfy his patrons (Khurana 1998). In other words, Mushtaq Hussain Khan’s know-all-repertoires

---

<sup>12</sup> By profession, Singh was a scholar of philosophy. However, he was a significant figure in the reform movement. Knowledgeable about Hindustani classical music, he published his writings on music, composed songs, and occupied high posts at All India Radio. Thakur Jaidev Singh was a supporter of Bhatkhande and closely associated with S. N. Ratanjankar, Bhatkhande’s prime successor.

approach was a component of his principle that a singer should be able to please audiences. As discussed earlier, the spiritual aspect of Hindustani music appealed to Mushtaq Hussain Khan. He considered singing *alap* as an invocation of God and interpreted song texts in a devotional manner. At the same time, he believed that musicians should gratify their audiences. These two attitudes coexisted in Mushtaq Hussain Khan. The reformist discourse of divine art, on the other hand, characterized the willingness to please audiences to be an attitude incompatible with a spiritual approach. In this interpretation, eagerness to please signified eagerness to receive rewards (typically money), and an attitude concerned with material gain could only be the opposite of a spiritual approach to music (as ideas, if not in practice). Mushtaq Hussain Khan's example illustrates how the reformist conception of "spiritual aspect of music" differed from that of hereditary musicians like him. One saw a conflict between spirituality and giving enjoyment, while the other did not.

To summarize, the association of classical music with divinity was not a new concept. The reform movement did not introduce it or restore it, despite some reformers' claims. The reformers nonetheless deployed the concept in new ways. First, they directed it to those who were outside Hindustani classical music culture and therefore were not familiar with the notion. As a consequence, the discourse of the "divine art" became an issue of social esteem—not only one's attitude toward making music. Second, the reformers redefined "devotional approach" to be a standpoint incompatible with entertaining the audience or considering music as a means of livelihood. Such exclusions do not seem to have

been common among hereditary musicians. I will discuss another, third difference below: reformers tied the notion of divine art with modern propriety. A devotional approach to music represented a feature appropriate to a civilized nation. This correlation of the spiritual and the civilized is most evident in the reformers' views on song text.

### **3. DEVOTIONAL SONG TEXT AND MODERN CIVILIZED SOCIETY**

Almost all reform leaders are credited for introducing song lyrics that are devotional in nature. Typical historical accounts (written by reform followers) rationalize the introduction of new lyrics as a necessity for disseminating Hindustani classical music. Then existent lyrics were “vulgar” and not appropriate for people from “respectable” families to sing. To solve the problem, the reformers cleverly introduced decent lyrics, which were largely devotional. The term “vulgar” or other similar adjectives in the historical accounts primarily refer to song lyrics of an amorous nature. Today, truly vulgar (i.e., obscene) lyrics are hard to come by. Musicians either do not know such compositions or do not want to sing them to a female researcher. Compositions with suggestive but non-explicit texts are many and well known. The lyrics concern romantic or illicit love, but they may be interpreted as referring to love between Radha and Krishna, instead of human love. While such interpretation makes the lyrics somewhat benign, they seem to have been still objectionable from the standard of the early twentieth century Indian bourgeoisie. For instance, some *khyal* songs may refer to bed (e.g., “My beloved is coming today. I will spread the bedding of

happiness in the courtyard”). More frequently, *khyal* compositions contain lines in which the heroine stealthily goes out of the house to meet her lover while fearing that her in-laws might notice her leaving. In the following song, the heroine cannot slip out of the house because the sound of her anklet would announce her furtive attempt to her in-laws.<sup>13</sup>

<i>Pāyal ki jhankār beraniya</i>	The sound of my anklet bells is like the other woman (my enemy)
<i>Jhananana bāje kaise ab main</i>	They ring “jhananana”
<i>Piyā se milan ko jāūn ab main</i>	How can I go see my beloved now?
<i>Virha se tan tāp tapat hai ...</i>	Because of the separation, my body is burning as if in fever ...

In another stereotyped line of lyrics, the heroine worries that her mother-in-law and sister-in-law might hear her (or her and her lover). The heroine runs away (or tells the lover to leave).

<i>Langar kankariyā jin māro</i>	O Krishna, hitting me with pebbles
<i>Angvā lag jāve</i>	They are hurting my body
<i>Sun pāve mori sās-nanadiyā</i>	My mother-in-law and sister-in-law will be able hear this
<i>Daur daur ghar āve</i>	I shall go home running

These song texts are not literally explicit. However, they obviously refer to romantic and extramarital love—divine or human.<sup>14</sup> *Thumri* compositions have texts that resemble those of *khyal* mentioned above. Peter Manuel lists a number of *thumri* and *dadra* texts in his book on *thumri* (Manuel 1989: 5-31, 155-159).

Local history at the University of Baroda states that the late nineteenth century reformer Maula Baksh avoided “inferior compositions” and chose to use

---

<sup>13</sup> Though the word “in-laws” is not mentioned in the text, the implication is clear to those who are familiar with the genre.

<sup>14</sup> Krishna’s consort Radha was married to someone else.

poetries of Kabir, Sur Das, Mira Bai, Narsingh Mehta, and Prem Anand (Thakkar 1992: 18). They were all poets of the *bhakti* movement, or Hindu devotionalism, that swept medieval India (These poets' lives are variously dated from fifteenth to seventeenth century). Apparently, their poems are religious and devotional in content, and Maula Baksh set their poems to music with the intention of using them to teach classical music to the general public. Historical narrative passed on at the Faculty of Performing Arts of the University of Baroda (i.e., the successor of Maula Baksh's school) follows the general pattern of reformist discourses.

The Late Prof. Maula Bux, [who] was a Dhrupad singer and [most] probably influenced by the religious texts of Dhrupad-Dhamar [compositions], must not have approved the erotic Khyal Songs for the students of his School. He [set] to musical compositions a number of devotional songs and solved in his own way the problem of [compositions]. This was a step in the right direction to win over the public who [did] not approve their sons singing songs of unacceptable sentiments (M. S. University of Baroda, Faculty of Performing Arts 1992: xx).

Maula Baksh's contemporary and rival, Faiz Mohamed Khan, similarly set polite and literary texts to music when he was appointed to lead a music school under Maharaja Sayaji Rao Gaekwar's patronage. A scholar attached to the Baroda Court selected verses for him from famous works of Sanskrit and Marathi literature (Rosse 1995: 133).<sup>15</sup> Thus students at the music schools in Baroda learned classical music through non-erotic, literary and devotional, somber and religious lyrics.

---

<sup>15</sup> Though Baroda is located in the Gujarati-speaking area, the Maharaja's family hails from Maharashtra and thus speaks Marathi. Court documents were therefore written in Marathi and not Gujarati. Also, the city had a significant size of Marathi-speaking population. These must be reasons why the court scholar chose verses from Marathi literature, instead of Gujarati literature.

Though Bhatkhande was not particularly outspoken on the issue of song texts, he did yield influence on song lyrics through his textbooks. The *Kramik Pustak Malika* series, the most extensively used of his textbooks, largely consists of compositions with polite and devotional texts. In the introductory volume of the series, the very first composition with lyrics is a song in praise of the god Shiva.

<i>Sadā Shiv bhaj manā nis-din</i>	O heart, always recite Shiva's name day and night (everyday)
<i>Ridhi sidhi dāyak</i>	He who gives possessions and accomplishments
<i>Binat sahāyak</i>	He who gives kind help
<i>Nāhak bhatkat</i>	The helpless wanders about
<i>Phirat anavarat</i>	He goes round and round without a cause

Following that is a moral song in praise of the guru. It lists the guru's virtues and sings one's indebtedness to him. The third texted composition is a song about the god Vishnu, praising him for maintaining the universe. Then follows another song about Vishnu, in the form of Krishna this time. The song encourages listeners to pray to and sing for Vishnu-Krishna. The first volume of the *Kramik Pustak* series contains twenty compositions with lyrics. All songs have polite lyrics. Among them, half of the songs are explicitly about one or other of the Hindu deities; a quarter of the songs have moral subjects such as praising a guru. The remaining songs deal with innocent topics such as waking up a boy who is sweetly sleeping (Bhatkhande 1995).

The *Kramik Pustak* textbook series was used in all schools that adopted the Bhatkhande system of education. For example, the School of Indian Music,

Baroda (former Baroda Music School) adopted this textbook series when the School went through reorganization in 1919. The Maharaja of Baroda invited Bhatkhande to give advice on the restructuring of the school, and thereafter the school formed its curriculum and syllabi in accordance with the *Kramik Pustak* textbooks. Likewise, Gayan Uttejak Mandali, where Bhatkhande taught until 1917, used the *Kramik Pustak Malika* as textbooks. Needless to say, Bhatkhande's own breakaway group Sharada Sangit Mandal, too, utilized *Kramik Pustak* for its classes. Madhav Music College in Gwalior—one of the most prominent music schools in the early twentieth century—started with Bhatkhande's aid. He trained the first teachers and provided the teaching materials. The school followed the *Kramik Pustak* textbooks from its inception. Marris College of Hindustani Music in Lucknow was another important institution that used the *Kramik Pustak* series as the guide for instruction. By the middle of the century, the school (re-christened to Bhatkhande University of Hindustani Music) was one of the most prestigious music colleges in North India. Apart from these well-known schools, there were many others that used Bhatkhande's system of instruction and therefore *Kramik Pustak* textbook series. Those schools were often affiliated with the large ones. For instance, in the Baroda State in 1919, five or six smaller state-run music schools were affiliated with the Baroda Music College in the capital (M. S. University of Baroda 1992: xx). The Marris College of Hindustani Music also had branches (e.g., Nagpur). The *Kramik Pustak* series has been influential since the 1920s and continues to be prominent till today, because schools affiliated with the Bhatkhande Music

College<sup>16</sup> still use it for the purposes of curriculum and examination.<sup>17</sup> Even those music schools that are unrelated to Bhatkhande and do not use his teaching method often use this textbook series. Prominent performing artists may not have learned music with this textbook series. Nonetheless, considering the vast number of learners who used it, the *Kramik Pustak* textbooks undoubtedly had a strong influence on how common learners conceptualized what Hindustani classical music was about. The majority of compositions contained in the *Kramik Pustak* textbooks have religious, devotional, or moral lyrics, and it is not unreasonable to assume—though textbooks are certainly not the only influence—that the textbooks persuaded average learners to associate Hindustani classical music with what these lyrics stand for: deities, devotion, and morality.

Paluskar is probably the reformer best known for foregrounding devotionalism in Hindustani classical music, due to his own high degree of commitment to religion. Like Maula Baksh, Paluskar used in his textbooks verses of famous *bhakti* poets such as Tulsi Das, Sur Das, Kabir, and other saints such as Guru Nanak. This was particularly the case for textbooks he intended for young learners, such as the *Sangit Bal-Prakash* series, three-part textbooks used in introductory classes at the Gandharva Mahavidyalayas. These textbooks were in fact collections of *bhajans* (devotional songs). Paluskar was explicit about the

---

<sup>16</sup> Since 1966, the *Bhatkhande Sangit Vidyapith* (Bhatkhande Music College) has functioned as an examining body. It is different from the actual university in Lucknow that is called *Bhatkhande Hindustani Sangit Mahavidyalaya* (Bhatkhande University of Hindustani Music). Other music schools are affiliated with the examining body, the Bhatkhande Music College, and not with the Bhatkhande University of Hindustani Music (soon to become the music department of Lucknow University).

<sup>17</sup> In 1986, Bhatkhande Music College had sixty branches with about three thousand students. I deem that the number of branches increased since then (Avasthi 1986: 3). No figure is available for the 1920s through 1940s.

intention behind his choosing religious materials for teaching classical music. In the preface to *Sangit Bal-Prakash* Volume One, he wrote, presumably to learners' guardians: "Upon obtaining such a useful textbook, be sure to make your children enjoy the praise of god and immerse himself in it" (Paluskar 1904a: 1). By singing these songs, he asserted, the learner would attain well being in life [lit. "gain profits/fruits of one's birth"] in addition to acquiring musical knowledge (Paluskar 1904b, unpagged). Paluskar conveyed to students and their guardians that learning music was tied to the virtue of devotion and therefore would bring rewards in life. The suggestion would have given parents assurance and further motivation for letting their children learn Hindustani classical music. For Paluskar, religion and devotion provided not only a way to approach music but also a way to attract the public to classical music.

The set of textbooks for the second level, a four volume series called *Swalpalap Gayan*, was also of devotional nature. These textbooks contained materials for teaching students variations (*tans* and *alaps*) and other methods of exposition. However, compositions on which to build these variations remained the same ones as in the first textbook series, *Sangit Bal-Prakash* (Paluskar 1921a, 1923). That is, the teaching materials for the second-level classes continued to be *bhajans* (devotional songs) by famous poets of *bhakti* movement (Hindu devotionalism). It is only in textbooks for more advanced learners—such as the *Rag Pravesh* series—that song text contained varied topics. Teaching materials in those upper-level textbooks finally included songs about the "beloved" (i.e., *balma*, *piya*, or *saiya*), which actually occupy a large portion of concert

repertoires (e.g., Paluskar 1913, 1921b). Students at Paluskar's Gandharva Mahavidyalayas were bred on religious songs from the novice stage to intermediate level. Determined students learned other kinds of songs, but, realistically speaking, the majority of students quit at the novice and intermediate levels. The Gandharva Mahavidyalaya's teaching materials could instill and affirm that Hindustani classical music was tied to divinity, religion, or devotion.<sup>18</sup> Paluskar published many songbooks that were primarily meant for the general public and not particularly for the Gandharva Mahavidyalaya classes. Such songbooks included quite a few collections of devotional songs—the *Bhajan-amrit Lahari* series and *Sangit Nam Smarni* series, for instance (Paluskar 1911, 1926, 1931). Through this second type of publication, Paluskar extended his influence outside the Gandharva Mahavidyalaya network to impress or affirm the association of classical music and religious devotion.

Several of Paluskar's students emulated their guru in applying devotional or polite literary text for their compositions. Narayan Moreshwar Khare substituted devotional lyrics for existing songs' lyrics (e.g., Singh 1974: 69). Khare was the singer at the Gandhi Ashram, living there with Gandhi and musically helping him in marches and demonstrations as well as prayer sessions at the Ashram. Another disciple of Paluskar, Omkarnath Thakur frequently set religious texts to music. When he headed the music department of the Benares

---

<sup>18</sup> Admittedly, teaching devotional songs first to a young learner was not new in the Hindustani music culture. According to Amelia Maciszewski, the first song Girija Devi learned as a young girl, at the inception of her serious training, was a song in praise of Allah (personal communication). I do not argue that reformers introduced the practice of teaching devotional songs to novices. Rather, as I argue later, the change that the reformers effected concerns associating religiosity with propriety in a modern nation.

Hindu University in the 1950s, he held a daily prayer session at which students were to sing his compositions with religious text. Chief among the songs was “Jaya Jaya Deva Hare (Victory to God),” whose lyrics were taken from *Gita Govinda*.<sup>19</sup> Thakur also set to music some Sanskrit mantras that a holy man called Devarat Swami had given him. These mantra compositions later became part of the daily prayer at the music department. The prayer sessions were obligatory and all students attended. At six o’clock, Omkarnath Thakur would lead the singing, and all students sang together. Bhatt recalls these prayer sessions to have been extremely impressive audile experiences (Bhatt, B. 1998).

Among Bhatkhande’s followers, S. N. Ratanjankar and G. N. Natu had large influences on the next generation of musicians and musicologists who learned at the Marris College of Hindustani Music (later Bhatkhande University of Hindustani Music). Natu and Ratanjankar taught there for the longest period of time among many teachers who taught at the college during the first half of the twentieth century. In particular, Ratanjankar was the chief instructor at the college since its establishment in 1926 and served as the Principal until 1957. Natu also held a teaching position at Marris College from its inception and remained there over fifty years. Though music instructions at Marris College followed Bhatkhande’s *Kramik Pustak* series of textbooks, teachers often taught other compositions including their own. Both Natu and Ratanjankar actively composed their own pieces; their works had moral, literary, or devotional texts. Sumati Mutatkar, a disciple of Ratanjankar, included many of his compositions in

---

<sup>19</sup> *Gita Govinda* is 12<sup>th</sup> century poetry written by Jayadeva. The verses are interpreted to refer to the Lord Krishna and his consort Radha.

her book length tribute to the guru. The following is one example, a *khyal* in Raga Gauri.

*Kirat Tumhari Tihun Lok Mon  
Sakal Guni Gandharva Sur Nar Muni  
Gaye Bajaye Sunaye Rijhaye*

*Ayo Darvajava Tihare  
Jor Jor Kar Binati Karat Sujan Din  
Bipat Sunaye Sunaye Sunaye*

Your renown pervades all the three worlds. The learned ones, *gandharvas* [heavenly musicians], divinities, men, sages, all sing your praises and delight the world. Sujan [Ratanjankar's penname], poor and helpless, has come to your door. With folded hands he is imploring you, narrating his tale of woe.

(Mutatkar 2001: 91. Her translation.)

The above text is devotional, most probably referring to the goddess Parvati, the wife of Lord Shiva (the raga name "Gauri" is another name for Parvati). Besides devotion, the text has a flavor of intellectual spirituality, since the verse is studded with wise sages (*Muni, Sur*), the learned and the virtuous (*Guni*), and the divine (*Sur, Gandharva*), who endorse and guide the human's effort to approach God. Music is deeply implicated in the devotional act; sages, the learned, heavenly musicians, and divinities all sing and play in praise of God. Thus humans too make music in their devotion and desire to approach God (or Goddess Gauri).<sup>20</sup>

G. N. Natu also created many compositions of his own, and they were taught at the Marris College. The Bhatkhande University's Golden Jubilee volume includes the following composition of Natu. It is a composition set to the

---

<sup>20</sup> Ratanjankar created numerous compositions, and they encompassed varied themes. Some compositions had lyrics that resembled traditional ones in which heroines long for the beloved. However, it remains that a significant portion of his output had devotional themes.

South Indian raga Narayani, which literally means the goddesses Lakshmi and Durga, the wife of the god Narayan.

<i>Karnī karnī kī mitvā more</i>	O my beloved, it is due to karma, our deeds
<i>Av sarayā anmol milyo hai</i>	Now I've received all that is priceless
<i>Karnī son kuchhu durlabh na</i>	Something is difficult to achieve with karma, our deeds
<i>Dīn narayan hūn ān milyo hai</i>	But kind Narayan came and blessed me (came to see the poor)
<i>Re karni karni ...</i>	It is karma, our deeds ...

(Bhatkhande University of Hindustani Music 1976: 96)

As the above examples demonstrate, Ratanjankar's and Natu's compositions often dealt with moral or devotional text content. Their students such as S. C. R. Bhat, K. G. Ginde, V. G. Jog, and Sumati Mutatkar learned compositions of their teachers in addition to traditional ones and ones in the textbooks. Compositions dictate which themes and topics are relevant in Hindustani classical music and which ones not (at least for voice students). The above named individuals' conceptions of Hindustani classical music—what its songs should be about, how the music should be presented, etc.—were not inconsequential, as they became influential teachers, performers, or media administrators in the latter half of the twentieth century.

Historical accounts of the reform movement consistently narrate that reformers introduced new lyrics because pre-existing song texts were unsatisfactory. The writers most commonly characterize the traditional texts as “vulgar”—too vulgar to teach to students from respectable families, or too vulgar

to attract the general public. Writers about Maula Baksh remark that he introduced devotional lyrics because pre-existing ones were “inferior,” “erotic,” or “of unacceptable sentiments” (Thakkar 1992: 18, Faculty of Performing Arts, University of Baroda 1992: xx). Likewise, biographers of Paluskar write that he applied new, devotional lyrics to *thumri* songs because those songs were popular but their original texts were “rather vulgar” (e.g., Singh 1974, Athavale 1967). In those portrayals, the application of religious lyrics was a reaction to vulgarity. In other words, the religious texts stood for the “refined,” “civilized,” and “cultured”—the antonyms of “vulgar.” Thakur Jaidev Singh most succinctly articulated the reason for changing lyrics. He was one of the main figures who advocated raising the literary quality of song texts. In his view, civilized song lyrics were necessary for the music of a civilized society.

There is one more thing that needs to be paid attention in music education of *the modern times*. That is song lyrics. Old compositions are beautiful from musical point of view, but they are extremely debased from the literary point of view. Mostly these compositions were made to please rajas, emperors, and *nawabs*. Khyal especially have very few compositions with worthy poetry. Some songs don't even make sense. Some songs consist only of filler words. Some songs are about quarrels between sisters-in-law. Some express the desire to drink alcohol. Some are full of indecent words. ... We need more improvement in this matter. We cannot sing debased songs in a *civilized* society (Singh 1974: 69).

The above passage makes it clear that changing lyrics was closely tied to Hindustani music's being (or becoming) civilized. Because the reformers introduced predominantly devotional texts as desirable new texts, the reform movement practically made the civilized and the devotional coincide. In the same passage, Thakur Jaidev Singh praised Vishnu Digambar Paluskar and his

disciples for having made much contribution in creating and propagating songs with fine lyrics. As discussed earlier, a large portion of Paluskar's compositions and those included in his textbooks were of religious nature. Among Paluskar's disciples, Singh commended Omkarnath Thakur because he used devotional song texts extensively. Singh similarly praised S. N. Ratanjankar and G. N. Natu, followers of Bhatkhande, for introducing fine song texts (Singh 1974: 69). Though not to the extent of Paluskar's disciples', compositions by Ratanjankar and Natu also had moral and devotional text. In concrete terms, then, those texts that Singh considered civilized consisted predominantly of devotional lyrics. The devotional overlapped with the civilized and cultured.

Thakur Jaidev Singh wanted lyrics to be cultured and meaningful, and his own compositions adhered to the principle. Singh's protégée Shanno Khurana gave the following example to illustrate what Singh meant by good, meaningful lyrics. Singh composed the song when he came back from his wife's funeral (Khurana 1998).

<i>[sthayi]</i>	<i>Tuut gaye bīn ke tār</i> <i>Līn bhayo ālāp tān</i>
<i>[antara]</i>	<i>Nād chhāye rayo ākāsh men</i> <i>Rāg nahīn nāshvān</i>

<i>[sthayi]</i>	The strings of the bin <sup>21</sup> are broken. Ālap and tans [improvised melodies] have disappeared too.
<i>[antara]</i>	But Nada—i.e., Brahma Nada [divine sound]—spread in the sky always remains. With the Nada, raga remains the same.

(Khurana's translation)

---

<sup>21</sup> Bin is a musical instrument of stick-zither type.

The Nada Brahma signifies divine sound, which is inaudible but perpetual. Musicians also interpret the concept of Nada Brahma to mean that music could be a way of serving god or a way of approaching divinity. Singh's song text tells that a person's body may leave this world but the soul (*ātma*) always remains (Khurana 1998). The soul of a person is compared to a raga and ultimately to the divine sound Nada Brahma. Both raga and Nada Brahma exist beyond physical sound and remain even when audible sound ceases. The composition conveys the transcendence of one's soul, raga, and divine sound.<sup>22</sup> Singh advocated songs with lyrics that were worth singing in modern civilized society (Singh 1974). He lauded reformers' compositions that typically had devotional lyrics. The example of his own composition also shows that his conception of "lyrics suitable for a civilized society" was connected to spirituality.

The discussion leads to the third difference between the reformist conception of music-divinity relationship and the same notion held more generally in non-reformist contexts. Comparatively speaking, the reformers' idea of divine art had a stronger implication of being civilized. In reformist discourses, heeding the music's relation to the divine was a civilized act, as devotional lyrics were implicitly categorized as civilized lyrics vis-à-vis "vulgar" lyrics of traditional compositions. Devotional or spiritual lyrics were doubly civilized in the context of the reform movement. Reformers introduced them for attracting the general public, and the public appreciation of the music was an

---

<sup>22</sup> The song is set to raga Darbari Kanara, which is a serious raga appropriate for the contemplative sentiment of the lyrics. Singh was also concerned with the compatibility of raga and song text.

indispensable feature of a civilized society (cf. Chapter 1). In other words, devotional song texts contributed to India's becoming a civilized society because they aided the general public's appreciation of classical music. Devotional lyrics indicated being civilized in this sense as well as themselves being considered civilized lyrics. Furthermore, the civilized overlapped with the modern. For Thakur Jaidev Singh, proper song texts with high literary quality were essential for music education in modern times (Singh 1974: 69). Modernity and civilized society required devotional lyrics.

To restate, reformers did not introduce the idea that music was divine. Nor was it any innovation on their part that they used devotional lyrics in classical music. Nonetheless, the reformist discourse of divine art departed from the more conventional version of the same idea. Besides any religious significance, reformers added the social implication of the public acceptability of Hindustani classical music. Second, the reformers characterized devotion and spirituality in music as an attitude incompatible with monetary interest and audience pleasing. Lastly, in reformist discourses on song texts, the devotional aspect of music often overlapped with notion of the civilized and modern propriety. Being modern, civilized, and devotional became proximate in meaning.

## **PART II. HISTORIOGRAPHY**

### **Chapter 4. Reformist Historiography of “Indian Music”**

#### **1. THE “HISTORY OF INDIAN MUSIC” IN THE REFORMERS’ VIEW**

Part I described the reform leaders’ efforts to cultivate scientific, classicist, and devotional approaches to Hindustani classical music. These endeavors were meant to enable the gentle society to appreciate the music. In the reformers’ reckoning, the new approaches also stood for the revitalization of the music, uplifting it from a “degenerate” state. As a direct cause that necessitated the reform—according to the reformist discourses, that is—the degeneration related to conditions in the reform’s immediate past and present: the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. However, the reformers linked their contemporary deterioration to a larger deterioration that began during the medieval period with the onset of Muslim ruling regimes. The reformist historiography of Hindustani classical music postulates an ancient golden age and a medieval decline. The ancient and the medieval correspond to the so-called Hindu and Muslim periods. In this historiography, the modern renaissance was yet to come, since the “British period” prolonged and aggravated the music’s medieval decline and did not bring modernity. Hindustani music’s modernity was the responsibility of the reformers.

In the reformist historiography, Hindustani classical music originally derived from the religious and scholastic tradition of the ancient Brahmans in the Vedic times. The music enjoyed a prestigious place in society. It was “looked upon not only as one of the more refined and exquisite of earthly pleasures but also as a means of spiritual culture” (AIMC 1920: 116). Since it was the music of the learned sector of the society, it also received intellectual attention. The ancestors “laid deep and wide the foundation of a Science of music with a precision and care which still excite our admiration” (AIMC 1918: 1-2). As it enjoyed a favorable environment, “Indian music” attained an advanced stage both as an art and an object of scientific inquiry during the first millennium, “when the people of other nations were singing and dancing like savages” (AIMC 1920: 122). The zenith of “Indian music” was variously estimated as fourth to sixth century (e.g., Coomaraswamy 1991 [1918]: 102), fourth to eighth century, (Rosenthal 1993 [1928]: xvii-xviii), and so forth, but always before Muslim rulers established themselves in the subcontinent. Before that, “Indian music” had an esteemed status, developed aesthetically and intellectually, and permeated the entire society. In Bhatkhande’s words, “time was when Music in India had ... and important place ... in the social, religious, and household life of the people” (AIMC 1919: 8).

After the Muslim powers conquered the northern part of the subcontinent, however, “Indian music” began to deteriorate. Quoting the British scholar N. A. Willard, Bhatkhande described the “decline” in his keynote speech at the first All-India Music Conference.

From [the time of Muslim conquest] we may date the decline of all arts and sciences purely Hindu, for the Mahomedans were no great patrons to learning, and the more bigoted of them were not only great iconoclasts, but discouragers of the learning of the country. The progress of the theory of music once arrested, its decline was speedy (Bhatkhande 1974 [1916]: 8-9).

In other words, the scholarly tradition of music declined because the Muslim rulers did not support Hindu scholarship. They had neither interest nor the knowledge to continue the tradition. The music as a performed art continued to develop for a while, but without theoretical foundations it also degenerated. Various corruptions crept into the music after “the art fell entirely into the hands of Mohammedan musicians” (AIMC 1919: 51).

An alternative explanation of the decline faults not the Muslim rulers but the kind of patronage that started with them. The system of royal patronage separated “Indian music” from its religious root, and the resultant secularization of the music made it vulnerable for moral degenerations, which eventually brought artistic degenerations. In the words of one reformer, as the music turned into the “entertainment of the luxurious class,” it became “prostituted by interested performers” (Tagore, P.C. 1926: 58; also B. T. Sahasrabuddhe 1904 in Rosse 1995: 102). Musicians had to cater to tastes of rulers who were ignorant of real aesthetics of the music and often preferred “cheap” and sensual forms of entertainment. The alternative explanation of the decline, one based on the form of patronage, ultimately holds the patrons’ religious identity culpable. The music’s transformation into a secular court music occurred because Islam does not recognize the religious significance of music (e.g., Keskar 1967a: 5).

The advent of British rule worsened the condition of “Indian music.” The colonial forces destroyed the Mughal court and other regional courts such as Awadh, thereby depriving classical musicians of patronage. The reformist historiography occasionally attributes the responsibility of the decline to the British more than Muslim rulers and musicians. In this version of music history, the music improved during the “Muslim period,” but the progress came to an end with the end of the “Muslim period” or with the “disappearance of Hindu and Mahomedan kingdoms in India”—that is, with British colonialism. “Indian music” subsequently fell into a decadent condition (AIMC 1920: 155, AIMC 1918: 5). Regardless of the evaluation of the “Muslim period,” reformers are unanimous on the harmful effect of the British colonialism. Due to the British rulers’ neglect of and even contempt for the “Indian music,” it suffered an ill fate. “Possibly owing to the educated classes’ ceasing to take interest in the subject, ... the art fell into the hands of illiterate professionals” (e.g., Bhatkhande in AIMC 1919 Appendix D; Tagore, P.C. 1926: 65; Bali 1926). In order to make a living after losing court patronage, musicians lowered themselves by teaching courtesans—also called dancing girls or prostitutes, “immoral” professional women. If employed at smaller courts, musicians were treated as entertainers rather than artists. In contrast to great honor and reward court musicians used to receive before British Raj, musicians were reduced to “mere appendages of the courts” employed for the purpose of maintaining prestige and decorum of princely states (Ratanjankar 1992: 192-193).

Reformers in the early twentieth century represented their movement in the context of this history of long degeneration, which had been occurring at least for several centuries and hit rock bottom just before their intervention. According to this narrative, the reform movement was historically required, absolutely required at that particular juncture in time. The reform was represented as a natural consequence of the history of Hindustani classical music; the history inevitably led to the reform movement. Along with the notions of modern civilized society and saving national culture, the reformist historiography served as a major rationale of the reform movement.

## **2. PROBLEMS OF THE REFORMIST HISTORY**

### **a. Linear History**

Music reformers propagated this tripartite history of a golden age, followed by the onset of degeneration, and the furthest degeneration since the late nineteenth century, and this conception of history was already axiomatic for reformers in the early twentieth century.<sup>1</sup> They continued to affirm this historiography by employing it repeatedly in speeches, lectures, books, and articles. Audiences at the All-India Music Conferences heard statements based on this historiography numerous times in the course of the conference. The reformist conception of history remains the standard music history in the late twentieth

---

<sup>1</sup> The chapters on Gayan Uttejak Mandali and Pune Gayan Samaj in Rosse's dissertation (1995) contain several quotations from the late nineteenth century that used this historiography.

century.<sup>2</sup> Despite its widespread acceptance, the reformist representation of music history has a number of problems, both factual and philosophical.

Factually, for instance, it is not clear whether the advent of British colonialism really diminished court patronage. The Mughal court patronage was annihilated, but it is possible that a decentralization of patronage ensued, possibly leading to expansion rather than diminishment. Such prominent patrons as Wajid Ali Shah were weakened but not finished as music patrons (He remained a music patron even after being deposed, if more modest in scale. Ceasing to be a ruler does not entail ceasing to be a music patron.) At the same time, however, many princely states came into existence or gained power because of British backing. The prominent music-patronizing states such as Gwalior, Baroda, and Patiala accumulated their massive wealth during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. According to Ian Copland, the Indian princely states were at the height of their power during the first few decades of the twentieth century (Copland 1997). Besides aristocracy, nouveau riche landed gentry—who amassed wealth under the British administration—also patronized classical musicians, employing them in the household as music teachers. On the other hand, it is very credible that the British-educated Indians were indifferent to or disdainful of Hindustani classical music, as reformers claim. However, that condition would not necessarily lead to a further decline in patronage, because it is doubtful that forefathers of those British-educated Indians supported Hindustani classical

---

<sup>2</sup> Instances of using the reformist historiography as the standard music history are numerous. A few among them are Keskar 1967: 64, 79 and *passim.*; Misra 1985: 11 and *passim.*; Athavale, V. R. n.d. (1980s); Sangoram 1988: 18 and *passim.*; Nadkarni 1990; and Mehta 1993: 141-2.

music, the music of courts. Whether or not employment positions for classical musicians dwindled during British colonialism is open to question, awaiting in-depth research.

Janaki Bakhle described an essentially modern character of court patronage in the Baroda State, contrary to the reformist depiction of it as one of few remaining places where the old tradition lingered (Bakhle 2002, Chapter 1). She also questions the alleged respect that classical musicians received as court musicians. In her account of the Baroda court, Hindustani classical musicians constituted only one type among many kinds of entertainers including theater troupes, acrobats, and so forth. Classical musicians were not the most favored or the highest paid among them. Bakhle's research deals with the early twentieth century and therefore does not by itself refute the reformist historiography. However, no study comparable in detail to hers accompanies the reformist claim that classical musicians were privileged at royal courts before the British destroyed them. There are some detailed accounts of the Awadh court in Lucknow, where musicians seem to have been privileged indeed (e.g., Sharar 1975). However, the case of late nineteenth century Lucknow may or may not have been an exception, as the case of early twentieth century Baroda may or may not prove to be a common case. Whether or not "deterioration" took place due to reduced patronage in the nineteenth century is an unsettled issue.

Philosophically, it is absurd to state that "Indian music" degenerated after the advent of Muslim rulers in the second millennium when the actual subject of reformers' discourses is Hindustani classical music, which exists as a historically

recognized entity only in the second millennium (cf. Kobayashi 1995). The absurdity occurs because reformers conceptualized the history of Indian music-cum-Hindustani classical music as a linear history. A linear history postulates a single stable subject of history that evolves through time. Thus, in the reformist historiography, ancient ritual chant is the self-same subject as the twentieth century North Indian classical music, while twentieth century ritual chant does not constitute that same subject of history. Reformist history regrets that “Indian music” ceased to be part of religious and daily life of the people in the recent centuries. This statement is based on the reformers’ idea that in the ancient times “Indian music” formed an integral part of every religious as well as cultural activity such as Sanskrit plays. The religious and cultural activities that the reformers cite, however, are all Brahman engagements. Ancient musics of non-Brahman communities are excluded from the subject of “Indian music” history. Kinds of music that did form part of people’s lives in the twentieth century—devotional songs, theater music, and folk music—do not qualify to be part of “Indian music” either. The sixth century court music in a certain city is assumed to be the same national music, but the concept of the nation or the idea of India—as we understand it now—did not exist then. The subject of “Indian music” history is a chameleon-like chimera, sometimes referring to all music, sometimes raga music in the broadest sense, and at other times Hindustani classical music in the twentieth century conception.

Many historians, sociologists, and even anthropologists have critiqued the linear conception of history, especially in relation to nationalist historiographies.

A nationalist historiography assumes the existence of the nation throughout time, from time immemorial, although the concept of nation-state the nationalist writers use is unarguably modern. Some scholars consider, from a philosophical point of view, that the very concept of nation requires a linear conception of history (Berman 1994). The nationalist historiography is anachronistic as it reads the present nation-state back in time and is teleological as it construes the past as evolving toward the present nation-state (e.g., O’Hanlon and Washbrook 1992, Chakrabarty 1992, Prakash 1992, Duara 1995). Similarly, the reformist music history is anachronistic because it extends the present understanding of the Indian nation into the past and assumes the existence of Indian national music throughout time. The reformist historiography is teleological because it reads the past as a single process moving toward the inevitability of the reform movement. Historical writings have as much to do with politics as with data and records.

### **b. The Notion of Revival**

Reformers as well as authors of the reform’s history describe the reform movement as the revitalization of Hindustani classical music. Also used are words such as “revival” (*punarujjīvan*, *punaruddhār*), “rejuvenation” (*punah-vriddhi*), “reawakening” (*punajāgaran*, *punarutthaan*), or “new awakening” (*nav-jāgaran*). Speeches recorded in the reports of the All-India Music Conference indicate that almost all speakers considered the reform as an effort to “revive” Indian music.<sup>3</sup> Reformist efforts are sometimes described as “restoring”

---

<sup>3</sup> Some of the examples at the All-India Music Conferences appear in AIMC 1918: 5, 7, 58; AIMC 1919: 8, 52, 57, Appendix C; AIMC 1920: 7, 86, 89, 122

or “retrieving” Hindustani classical music. I list a few examples below. In his letter requesting governmental funding to institute the Marris College, Umanath Bali stated the objectives of founding the College. The foremost goal of such an institution was revival.

The [objectives] of starting a music college are to (1) *revive old and ancient art of music* and to introduce it to high society, which from the last 60 years has fallen in the hands of illiterates, (2)...” (Bali 1926, Jan. 21).

At the Second All-India Music Conference in 1918, Srinivas Pandeya stated that real significance of music was salvation of the soul. He lamented the lack of this capacity in his contemporary music scenes but expressed optimism that it might be revived soon.

Since the intelligent public has now begun to take interest in the sublime art, it is quite possible its *regeneration* might come on at an early date (AIMC 1919: 52).

The standard history of the reform presents the same portrayal of the reform as in reformers’ discourses. In the introductions to the biographies of Bhatkhande and Paluskar, B. V. Keskar summarizes the entire reform movement as follows.

In the field of music also, efforts were being made to recognise it as an essential part of our national culture and to *revive its past glory*. Music had, till then, fallen into the hands of an unimaginative and illiterate class of artistes and had become a matter of privilege and enjoyment for the limited number of rich people. The *spirit of revival* and reform sought to change this state of affairs. The pioneers of this movement were two inspired youths—Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande ... and Vishnu Digambar Paluskar ... who dedicated their lives to the cause of the uplift of music (Keskar 1967b, c).

Another follower of Bhatkhande characterized his work as retrieval and restoration of Hindustani classical music.

Bhatkhande was born to *retrieve the forgotten treasures of Hindustani music and restore these national treasures* to the rightful owners, namely, the people who had lost touch with them for many centuries” (Misra 1985: 80).

The notion of revival was prevalent in the Indian society during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. The notion applied to widely varied fields such as religion, literature, politics, visual arts, or education. According to Bose and Jalal, cultural nationalists were highly concerned with the difference between “reform” and “revival.” The former was based on belief in rational knowledge, and the latter in reviving ancient traditions. Intellectuals engaged in debates as to which approach was more appropriate (Bose and Jalal 1998: 110-111). The difference between “reform” and “revival” did not seem to have bothered reformers of Hindustani classical music. The term “reform” appears less frequently, but it is either synonymous or compatible with the idea of “revival” in discourses of music reformers. In the case of music reform, “revival” was not that of musical sound but of theoretical discourse and Hindu devotional approach (Kobayashi 1995). As reformers accepted that the ancient tradition of music theory was based on rational knowledge, reviving that tradition did not generate any conflict with the idea of reform based on modern rational knowledge. Also, the reformers asserted that their emphasis on spirituality simultaneously stood for the revival of an ancient feature and the introduction of modern, civilized propriety.

The notion of revival was obviously based on the reformers’ conception of the “decline.” Social esteem, spiritual approach, and theoretical discourse that the music possessed in its golden age were “lost” during the long decline, and they

needed to be “revived.” The idea of revival is a product of the linear conception of history. Reform, by definition, involves change and the rejection of the past. The main arenas of reformist activities—music schools, textbooks, public concerts and conferences—were irrefutably new and changed what was typically considered “tradition.” It was also apparent that conditions of classical music in Europe inspired the changes which reformers introduced. Nonetheless, the notion of revival enabled the reformers to claim that they were ensuring the continuation of the self-same “Indian music” at the same time as rejecting the music’s past—for several decades, a few centuries, or even the entire length of the conceivable existence of Hindustani classical music. The idea of revival enabled the reformers to resolve the tension between the authenticity of cultural continuity and the inauthenticity of change, especially western-influenced change. The reformers could claim continuity and reject the past without apparent contradiction. Changes that would otherwise have been called “westernization” (e.g., notation, systematic formal instruction) were arguably the continuation of the ancient features of “Indian music”—features from its golden age, when the music was scientific. As concerns the single subject of linear history, that which evolves is that which remains.

### **3. THE DISCOURSE OF POWER**

The reformist historiography of Hindustani classical music shares many of the problems of nationalist historiography that historians and sociologists point out. However, a problem more crucial to my dissertation pertains to the

dichotomizing narrative devices employed in the historiography. The reformist historiography of “Indian music” and the conventional narrative about the reform both discursively oppose Hindu educated classes with a spiritual approach and Muslim illiterate professionals with an entertainer approach. Both the general music history and the history of the reform define the latter type of personnel to be the problem.

In the reformist historiography, “Hindu” and “Muslim” are contrary terms because “Indian music” enjoyed its golden age during the “Hindu period” and began to decline during the “Muslim” period. The educated is synonymous with the Hindu because the music’s ancient glory owes to the fact that the educated sector of society, Brahmans, practiced the music. The music deteriorated when Muslim musicians who were ignorant of the tradition of theoretical discourses in Sanskrit became guardians of the music. The ignorance of music theory was one cause of decline. Another cause of decline relates to the music’s ceasing to be a spiritual tool, and in the reformist music history the spiritual is synonymous with the Hindu. The ancient times constitute a golden age because Brahmans cultivated the music for spiritual purposes. The “Muslim period” sets off the decline because Islam does not give a spiritual meaning to music and thus it became secular court music for entertainment. The process of dichotomization is very clear. The use of the opposite terms Hindu and Muslim, educated and ignorant, and spiritual and entertainment characterize the contrasting conditions of golden age and decline. The reformist historiography thereby creates a dichotomy between Hindu/educated/spiritual/golden age and

Muslim/ignorance/entertainment/decline, and of course the latter set of terms represents the problem.

Through the aggravating “British period,” the reformist music history arrives at the utmost deterioration in the reformers’ immediate past, when the worst kind of personnel became the music’s guardians. The reason why those “low class” people came to practice the music is usually the decline itself. In most instances of the reformist historiography, it is because the music was in an awful condition that it fell into the hands of “ignorant,” “illiterate,” or “immoral” class of professionals (e.g., AIMC 1920: 9, 155; Tagore 1926: 65; Nayar 1989: 30-34; Keskar 1967: 79-86-87). According to the logic of this history, then, the music’s degeneracy in the reformers’ immediate past epitomizes the millennium long decline. The condition of Hindustani music during the reformers’ time is not represented to be a separate matter from the coming of “Muslims” that set off the music’s slow descent. The reformist historiography joins together the two circumstances centuries apart. The two circumstances are so distant that it is most probably not possible to establish any concrete evidence of connections. The linkage between the two is only possible in the reformist imagination of music history: the linear teleological conception of history that justifies the reform by necessarily leading toward it.

Through this forced linkage, the reformist historiography tacitly superimposes the dichotomy in the distant past onto the time of the reform movement. Part I of the dissertation discussed that reformers advocated two major approaches to the music: one based on scientism and intellectualism, and

the other on classicism and devotionalism. Reformers courted the “educated classes” and aimed to activate theoretical discussions and scientific approaches befitting the educated classes. Reformers also pursued the attention of the gentle and “civilized” sector of the society by promoting a devotional approach to the music through devotional song texts and a classicist conception of the music through highbrow literary texts. In other words, reformers defined their movements’ members as educated and spiritual as opposed to the ignorant professional entertainers of their immediate past and present. To be fair, reformist discourses hardly ever use the word “Muslim” in connection with their contemporary “professional class” of musicians. Nevertheless, by depicting the immediate past as belonging to the same decline that started a millennium ago, the reformist historiography maps the dichotomy of the golden age and decline in the distant past onto their contemporary dichotomy of the reform and pre-reform predicament.

Distant Past:	<u>Golden age</u> Hindu period educated practitioner theoretical spiritual	<u>Decline</u> Muslim + British periods ignorant practitioner lack of theory entertainment
Contemporary:	<u>Reformer</u> educated + scientific devotional (Hindu) (revival of golden age features)	<u>Professionals</u> ignorant + illiterate sensual entertainment (result of the decline)

The term “Muslim” easily transfers, conceptually, into the set of terms used in reference to professional musicians in the early twentieth century, even though reformers did not use the word “Muslim” in direct association with the “debasement” in their immediate past. For most listeners and readers of the

reformist music history, the association must have been tacit but evident, since most professional musicians were Muslims in the early twentieth century. The absence of articulation and the presence of implication make the reformist discourses ambiguous but clear. The reform did not concern the Hindu-Muslim issue because not all professional musicians were Muslims, and the main issues of the reform were not about religious communities (the central concern was modern progress, as discussed in Part I). At the same time, the reform did involve the Hindu-Muslim issue because most professional musicians were Muslims and the reformist discursive devices made it so. The reformist discourses dichotomously sets educated and devotional Hindu reformers against uneducated and patron-pleasing (or pecuniarily bent) Muslim professionals in the twentieth century, without too obviously doing so but with an apparent subtext.

The standard history of the reform, written mostly by reform followers, likewise contributes to the dichotomization of Hindu educated classes and Muslim uneducated professionals. The standard account of the reform restates the reformist music history. Besides, the conventional account of the reform places responsibilities of the pre-reform predicaments on the “professional class” of musicians. Hindustani classical music was not widespread among the educated classes because its knowledge was not accessible and also because the respectable society considered the music disreputable.

In the conventional account, blame for the inaccessibility of classical music partly goes to its being court music but partly to professional musicians who neglected teaching. Professional musicians stubbornly refused to teach

because of “their inborn prejudice and narrow-mindedness” (AIMC 1919: iii). Classical music was not taught as a cultural achievement in the early twentieth century because hereditary musicians were “narrow-minded” and “averse to teaching anyone for fear of creating rivals out of their own disciples!” (Misra 1968 and 1985: 11). Sobhana Nayar represents as follows cases of rare aspirants who managed to become formal disciples (i.e., accepted as disciples with a string ceremony).

Sometimes one had to wait for an indefinite period if he was lucky enough not to be rejected straight away. The pupil belonging to this category was a victim of whimsical and irregular hours of teaching by the *guru* against which he was in no position to protest. The result was that a considerable precious time was wasted to receive even elementary knowledge. Needless to say, he received no training in the theory of music. If he were an intelligent person with educational background he would perhaps try to enrich his theoretical knowledge from the books, which were scanty and not easily available. The pupil of this category had to do the entire household chores in the name of service to the *guru* and, therefore, he could hardly get any time for practice (Nayar 1989: 40).

After enduring the miserable condition for many years, the student may receive only up to fifty percent of the *guru*'s knowledge. Even the teacher's close male relatives were not entitled to receive all of his knowledge; those blood-relatives might learn about three quarters of what the *guru* knew. In general, the professional master taught only his sons without any reservation (Singh in Nayar 1989: 40). The educated classes would not take interest in the subject due to professional musicians' maltreatment of disciples. Also, the professional musician's custom of teaching (or not teaching) obstructed even the general public's sporadic attempts to gain musical knowledge. In the standard account of

the reform, hereditary artists are culpable for estranging Hindustani classical music from the general public.

The second reason why the music was estranged from the general public was Hindustani classical music's disrepute among the gentle society. The conventional history of the reform attributes the infamy partly to rich and decadent patrons but partly to professional artists who went along the patrons' predilection in order to receive remuneration. A typical explanation indicts courtesans and professional musicians, stating that they performed music "only" to please their patrons and considered music "merely" as a means of making money.

[The practicing women] had made music into a means of livelihood. And those people, the practicing women and others, were not educated. So, their only attitude towards music was just making money out of it. Some of them, those very talented, did rise to great heights artistically. But still, the purpose was only limited to that: earning money for their livelihood, [or] pleasing people in the evening time [and] late evening time... (Vyas 1998).

Nayar provides a somewhat more kindly account, depicting professional musicians as passive recipients of patrons' desires, rather than as agents trying to please and make money.

[The landholder system that the British introduced] created a class of people who resorted to a life of luxury and mostly debauchery. These self-styled moneyed aristocrats ... reared and patronised the musicians and music as a part of their amorous life. Wine, music and vice were closely connected and music was used for exciting sensual desire. Therefore, the musicians who took shelter with these aristocrats had to cater to their cheap tastes....

To earn their livelihood, a class of songsters and songstresses came up, fostered by the low tastes of this nobility. They were naturally looked down upon by society.

In the latter half of the nineteenth century and thereafter music and vice were closely connected. The result was that to an educated mind with puritanical values, music meant straight road to immoral and sinful living. Culture of music meant giving up decent life and resorting to a life of sensuality. Our great heritage of music and its purpose of elevating and uplifting the soul was lost and forgotten (Nayar 1989: 32-33).

Thus, along with the sinful aristocrats, professional musicians were responsible for the alienation of Hindustani classical music from the gentle society. They were complicit in making the music associated with vices and debauchery, or sometimes they were themselves guilty of the vices and debauchery.

To summarize, the standard narrative about the reform holds professional musicians accountable for the music's failure to proliferate among the general public, because they restricted the availability of musical knowledge and also because they created (or helped create) the detestable images of Hindustani classical music, distancing the general public as a result. By depicting professional musicians as the source of the ill conditions that the reform movement remedied, the conventional history plainly contrasts narrow-minded, vice-ridden professional musicians and reformers who stoically worked for the interest of the general public. According to this account, by making classical music widely available the reformers benefited not only the general public but also the Indian nation.

By using contrasting adjectives, the standard account of the reform dichotomizes the two groups of musicians: the reformers and professionals in the

early twentieth century. The conventional explanation of the reform formulates a pool of adjectives for each group of musicians, and these adjectives again overlap with those used in the reformist history of “Indian music” to depict the golden age and decline.

Contemporary:	<u>Reformer</u> serving public/national interest moral, civilized (revival of golden age features)	<u>Professionals</u> narrow-minded corrupt, vices (result of the decline)
Remote Past:	<u>Golden age</u> Hindu period part of public life high social esteem	<u>Decline</u> Muslim + British periods confined to narrow circles esteem / neglect

The similarity of adjectives makes the “narrow-minded” professional musicians, who constricted people’s access to musical knowledge, a discursive equivalent of the music’s “imprisonment” in the “narrow” aristocratic environment, one of the causes of the music’s “decline.” Neither reformist discourse nor the standard history of the reform uses the term “Muslim” in relation to early twentieth century hereditary musicians. Nonetheless, the side of professional musicians is understood to be “Muslim” because hereditary musicians were largely Muslims and also because the standard history superimposes the alleged attributes of the “Muslim period” onto professional musicians in the early twentieth century.

To restate, the reformist historiography of “Indian music” and the standard history of the reform together dichotomize “educated Hindu respectable reformers” and “uneducated Muslim corrupt professionals.” Both types of historical narratives constitute the discourse of power, as they discursively demarcate “us” and “them” and define “them” to be the problem. “Their”

attributes caused the long decline of “Indian music”; “they” made and kept “Indian music” publicly inaccessible and morally unacceptable for the gentle society. The discourses plainly assert reformers’ power vis-à-vis hereditary professional musicians. The element of public or national interest adds another weight to the power balance. At the most obvious level, reformist discourses always presented the reform as a national interest (cf. Chapter 1). Reformers claimed that the revitalization of Hindustani classical music was most necessary because “music” occupied a fundamental place in the evolution of a nation. Reformist agendas were matters of national importance; therefore “the whole nation must take up the cause and make a grand and organized effort” (Bhatkhande in AIMC 1919: 9). According to Anthony Giddens, ideology operates in the following manners: (a) it represents sectional interests as universal ones, (b) denies or transmutes contradictions, and (c) naturalizes the present (Giddens 1979: 193-196). The reformist accounts of music history, as discourses of power, represent reformers’ interests as national interests. The reformist historiography also bears the remaining two characteristics on Giddens’s list. It oddly labels the historical juncture in which Hindustani classical music emerged as an entity to be the beginning of its own “decline.” The reformist music history masks the contradiction by postulating the single stable subject “Indian music.” This subject sometimes refers to Hindustani classical music, which supposedly emerged after the “mingling of Hindu and Muslim elements.” At other times, the same subject refers to “Brahmanic tradition of music theory,” which allegedly disappeared after the Muslims became the music’s guardians. The variable

referents nonetheless constitute the same entity called “Indian music,” and the reformist historiography thus denies the contradiction embedded in its most basic premise of “decline.” Lastly, the reformist historiography of “Indian music” naturalizes the reform as a “natural” consequence of that history. The slow and long decline culminated in the utmost debasement in the late nineteenth century, “necessitating” the emergence of a reform movement. The reformist portrayal of the “history of Indian music” is clearly ideologically motivated.