

Nada Samvad

Musical journey of
Pandit Vinayak Torvi ji

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Forward

Tadviddhi pranipatena pariprashnena sevaya
upadekshyanti te jnanam jnaninastattvadarshinaha

(4th chapter 34th verse Bhagavadgeeta)

[Learn that by your obeisance humble reverence, by questioning and by your service; the wise who have realized the truth, will instruct thee, in (that) knowledge (jnana)]

To learn arts or to gain knowledge, one must approach the learned scholars in the field, surrender to them, serve them and if only he/she is inquisitive enough and asks with humility, the guru will impart the knowledge. Only if the enquirer or the student is dutiful and has the passion to learn, then only the knowledge can be imparted to him. If the vessel is pure, the imparted knowledge will bear fruit. Pouring pure milk in a rusted vessel will be a waste of milk. To gain that purity the seeker must serve the Guru. Keeping that in mind Purandaradasa has sung – “Guruvina Gulamanaguva tanaka | Doreyadanna Mukuti ||” Without surrendering to Guru, knowledge or Art cannot be gained.

A student should let go of his ego, hesitation, leave the ignorant belief that he knows or can do everything. And then, he should aspire to gain knowledge only through sacrifice and service. If he gains the blessings of an able guru, all knowledge will automatically follow.

This ‘Nada Samvad’ book has come out as a conversation, as a question and answer series. It’s the same way in which all the knowledge has been passed down to us. All the Upanishads are in conversational style only. Guru Charitra and all the other scriptures are documented question and answers sessions. Veda-Sangeet is Shruta-vidya. Shruta vidya is that which can be learnt only through hearing and listening. These are not those that can be learnt through reading or studying. Hence these art-forms should be practiced under the guidance of a Guru.

Music is not just memorizing. Memorized knowledge is like a water filled in a tank. It's limited. After you take out 4 or 5 buckets, the tank will be empty. But knowledge should be like a spring, ever-flowing. There is no end. A Guru teaching a bandish and the student just memorizing it, is not Education. A true guru will teach the nature of the raga, its aesthetics, improvisation and a unique vision or a different perspective to look at ragas. He will teach the method of thinking. A clever student will improve the knowledge given by his guru with his own talent. In Music, learning is relatively more compared to teaching. "Gurostu mouna vyakhyanam shishyastu chinna samshayaaha" This is the Rushi or 'Aarsha' tradition. All this is learnt through constant and continuous association with the Guru. In this book, the teaching methodology of Pt. Vinayak Torvi ji's guru Gayanacharya Gururao Deshpande ji is beautifully explained.

Shadja Kala Kendra Trust® is very happy to bring this Nada Samvad on the auspicious occasion of Pt. Vinayak Torvi Amrut Mahotsav. My Guruji has completed 75 years and I pray to Divine mother to bless him with good health. I would like to acknowledge and thank Sri Abhay Damle who translated abstracts from kannada book Nadanusandhana. I would like to thank Sri Subramanya, who published the original kannada book through Sahitya Prakashana, Hubli. Shadja Kala Kendra is thankful to Dr. Medini N, for editing this book. I thank my students Sujith T N, Satyajee Sanju and Shamantak for their contribution to this book. On behalf of Shadja, I would like to thank Sri Sripathi Bhat and Sri Arul Kumar of Bright printers for bringing this out as a beautiful book. I thank Sri Srinath for a wonderful cover design and I would like to thank all the trustees and advisers of Shadja Kala Kendra trust for their continuous support. I would express my gratitude towards donors who helped us in bringing out this book.

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Dr. Dattatreya L Velankar

Dattatreya Velankar: It is said that samskaras of the person's mother, father and Guru in the present life, as well as his past birth adds to one's own samskaras and play a major role in the upliftment and success of any person. Guruji, please tell us about the 'sangeet samskara'.

Pandit Vinayak Torvi (Guruji): According to our Hindu dharma shastras, there is a reference to 'punarjanma' (rebirth) in many scriptures. From our Guru, in pravachanas, in keertans, and puranas, we hear them saying 'Do good deeds'. That alone will create a new balance in your next life/birth. As in banking language, 'today's closing balance is tomorrow's opening balance'... this means if you do good deeds today, it will certainly bring in good days to you; whereas, indulging in bad activities, will certainly leave you devastated. As proclaimed by Sanskrit subhashitakars "karmanugo gachchati jeeva ekah". It is one's actions (Karma) that alone follows till his end. Likewise, if a couple has three children, the children may excel in three different fields. One might become a musician, one might be interested in spirituality and become a sanyasi and one might become a cricketer. What made them choose different paths? Why aren't they alike? Therefore, we say it is 'poorva janma samskara' that decides one's journey on the path. In this world, we think every incident that happens in our lives is accidental and we tend to take it very casually. But nothing is accidental. From a spiritual point of view, everything is Ishwar's will or God's volition. Accordingly, every event from your birth, starting from whom you are born to, the samskaras that you carry with you, are decided by the Lord. We essentially need the samskaras of our past life. Now you see, how did this interest of mine towards music or the talent that I possess got recognised? I might have been a musician in my past life and would have certainly done Guru seva or sangeet sadhana with sincerity. Therefore, in this life, I took birth in the house of Anusuyabai Torvi and Keertanakesari Malhar Rao Torvi, who was a great devotee of Chidambara Mahaswami. My parents were devoted to God, Guru and elders. Importantly, my father was an eminent keertankar. Having said about 'keertankar', I remember, Bhimsen Joshi's father was a Sanskrit scholar. My friend

Madhav Gudi's father also happens to be a keertankar and your (Dattu) father, Lakshmandas, too is renowned keertankar. Why were you born in a keertankar's house? There is some correlation here. Keertan art form is known as an 'ashtapailu' which means it has eight dimensions. Kathakeertan comprises of classical music, dance, drama, conversation and mono-acting. What is not there in it? It is indeed a paragon of several art-forms. We have heard that several eminent Muslim singers of Gwalior gharana were performing kathakeertans. Many were taught harikatha and tabla that enabled them to have a grip on tala and laya. And those with good voice were given training in vocal while others would be trained in instruments like Sitar or Sarangi. Irrespective of the religion one belongs to, his 'Samskar' plays a vital role in grooming any individual. I am not sure if Malhar Torvi and Anusuyabai Torvi were my parents in my past life too, however, my good deeds in my past-life have bestowed them as my parents in this life and I am truly blessed to be born to them.

Music is a must in keertan. My father performed keertans in Naradeeya style. It had Saki, Dindi, Arya, Chand, Chota khayal, Tarana, Sanskrit Shlokas, Marathi Abhangas, Kannada devaranamas, hindi bhajans and Vachanas. Music is an integral part of it. Keertan is full of music. You would have seen that keertankars speak based on a note. This shows the importance of music in keertan. Keertankars speak in Gandhar, Madhyama and in Pancham and if the situation needs, they even speak in Dhaivat. This is how Kathakeertan is strongly connected to classical music. I was born in 1948. When my father started performing Kathakeertan during 1954-55, I was about 7-8 years old. My father bought a Harmonium when he was in Hubli. It had "1956" written on it. I still have it with me. He had bought it in 1956 mainly to enrich keertans with music. Let me tell you something, for an art-form to flourish, basic needs of a livelihood of the artist should be supported. Poverty kills literature, it kills music. And those days were very tough. We are very prosperous now. But we are hardly doing what we should do. In those old days, people were not doing jobs along with art-forms. Keertankars did only keertans, classical singers

only sang classical music. Writers took support of literature alone. Why did these keertankars, writers not leave their field and indulge in business, or open cinema theatres? Their objective was not to earn money but to experience and preserve the art-forms that have been passed on to them across generations and transfer them to their children and grandchildren. They worked hard to preserve these traditions. Even my grandfather performed Keertans. Gondavali Brahmachaitanya maharaja was an incarnation of Maruti and his disciple Brahmananda used to come over to our house very often.

***Dattatreya** : I have heard that he has gifted your elders with taalās. Isn't it Guruji?*

***Guruji** : Yes, Brahmananda was a person who did thirteen crore Ramajapa and had a vision of Rama. He used to come to our house. My grandfather's name was Kallappa, and my father was Mallappa. He asked "What does your son do? Does he go to any school?", then he said, "Malhari, come here. Your father and grandfather did keertans. Do you know keertans?" Then my father replied "I am still a kid, sir. I haven't learnt to perform keertan yet." He said, "Even if you don't know anything about keertan, take this tala and just start singing 'Rama Rama', Rama will become your Guru." Then Brahmananda gave him one tala. My father would always be in tears while he narrated this to us. He got the samskara of Rama. Brahmananda's visit to our house, giving of the tala, everything is pre-planned as Lord Krishna says in the Gita, "**Dadaami buddhiyogam tam**" (I will confer to those devout, the Yoga of wisdom by which they can attain me). In this modern era, we snub this off as just a coincidence. But it's not at all a coincidence. Hence, we are meant to take on the samskara that we are bestowed with. For the reason that, it is not something which you have bought using money or earned with hardwork but it is innate and intrinsic to you. Don't forget that. Some have talent in music but they seldom practice. So, I tell them, "something has come to you innately, don't leave it; take it forward. God who has given us birth will give us something. Believe it. If you have faith in your art or your work, that faith itself will sup-*

port you. As Brahmananda gave the tala, my father started performing keertans. Initially, he was doing keertans based on Ramayana and Mahabharata. At that time, a book named 'keertana sangraha' was very popular in Maharashtra. The keertan tradition was very strong there. Naradeeya panth and Varakari panth were quite famous in that region. He too bought 'keertana sangraha' and learnt about the *purvaranga* (introductory verse). He then started to practice this particular style of keertan and bought a Harmonium for the sake of music. But, how would he learn to play it? With four children and a job with a salary of fifteen rupees, he had nothing for his livelihood. He didn't know music much. But in Keertans he used to sing "shriman mahaganadhipataye namah" in gandhar very beautifully. It was an integral part of his innate samskara. He had a beautiful voice. He used to sing till panchama of upper octave even when he was 94 years old. Even now you can listen to this in his recordings. My father didn't know what off-tune (besur) was. Because he didn't know what tune (sur) was too. Only if you know what sur is, you would know what besur is. He was truly blessed to sing in sur always. He used to sing a dindi "Prathama johar karuni vithumahar" in khamaj raag after singing a saki "brahmaputra mi, sakala jagamadhe" in Jogiya.

Naragund Chidappa, a scholarly keertankar who was proficient both in Kannada and Marathi, was well known to my father. Keertan refers to 'a sharp and an effective way to impress and convey people whatever needs to be conveyed.' Today we are striving hard to preserve and take forward the Keertan art form.

Sometimes we go in search of a Guru. But it is destined and decided by the God as who should be whose Guru/shishya. Any random person cannot be a Guru to a random student. For a Guru like Brahma Chaitanya Maharaj, a student like Brahmananda should be a shishya. For Chidambara swami there should be shishyas like Rajarama, Vithabai, Shivashastri and Sakharama Trayambaka Garde. It is a well-known fact that only a competent student capable enough to withhold the knowledge, passed on by a Guru, can be a true shishya.

Dattatreya : *Guruji, how did you come under the influence of Chidambar mahaswami?*

Guruji : Chidambar mahaswami incarnated 200 years back. He was indeed a poorna Brahma avatar. About six to seven devotees of his, have written innumerable granthas during his time.

Tammanna Bhat was an eminent harikatha vidwan of Dharwad who preserved and practiced many abhangs of Chidambar mahaswami. At that time he was 75 years old. He was concerned as to whom to give all the preserved literature of Chidambar mahaswami so that it is preserved further. One day he had a vision of Chidambar mahaswami in his dream telling him to give all the preserved literature to Malhar Torvi. By giving all the literature of Chidambar mahaswami to my father, he sowed the seed of Chidambar mahaswami in my father's heart. And today we are taking it forward. Our kuladevata is Chandrala Parameshwari and our worshipping deity is Chidambara. In this way, my father has learnt many Chidambar mahaswami keertans. Though poverty persisted in the family, he dared enough to take forward the keertan artform with utmost devotion. Today, my elder brothers, Shivanna and Amrut Torvi do perform keertans. My younger brother, Chidambar, plays Tabla and has even accompanied me on my US and Gulf concert tours. In this way, keertan samskar seeded in us influenced all of us to learn music. Our duty is to serve our Guru, preserve and take forward whatever we have learnt and need to pass it on to our next generations. We cannot just go on singing. We have to take the tradition forward.

Dattatreya : *How did you start learning Classical music? Were you singing with your father when you were young?*

Guruji : I think, living in a place like Dharwad itself is the reason for that. We were made to sing at any function or a festival. We sat and sang bhajans. Every Monday we used to do Chidambar bhajans and still do it till date. For that, a harmonium master would come to play but he would never let me play the harmonium. I used to get an-

noyed. One day he was unwell, hence I got a chance to play. As I observed him keenly while he played for us, I tried to understand how the octave would go up as the keys go up. Later when singing 'Shiva Shiva' I would play thinking that it is 'sa re ga ga'. My father and Chidambar swami are my Gurus. Learning harmonium in that way, later, I accompanied stalwarts like Mallikarjun Mansur, Gururao Deshpande and Basavaraj Rajaguru.

My mother used to sleep in the afternoon. We would return from school at around 3 o'clock. A beggar used to come to our house and play only one scale and sing 'Guruvina gulama naaguva tanaka doreyadanna mukuti'. He used to repeat the same song at every house. But he used to play very well. I used to observe his playing too. He had a beautiful voice. We advice others to drink hot water, not to use a/c or to not eat items directly from refrigerator. But, even after eating food that he got as alms, he had a wonderful voice. I used to follow him and later my mother used to come in search of me. Like this, I started singing and playing the Harmonium.

Since I had a good voice, my parents started talking about having me take classical music classes. In those days, learning music meant only classical music. Natyageet and Bhavageet were not in the learning category. There were no light music classes at all. And if we wanted to learn music, we had to give fees. During those days, having enough money for even two meals a day was difficult. Who would give money to learn music? There was a "Dharmartha Sangeet Pathashala" half-kilometre away from our house. It was opened to help people like us. It was a first-of-a-kind free school. There was a scholar named Narayanachar Dandaapur. He taught in Gandharva Mahavidyalaya and in Bijapur Sangeet Peetha. Music was different during those days, now it is different. Now, music means - when someone sings in front of mic; wins different awards; or performs on TV. Musicians of that time respected the knowledge about music as well. They used to ask 'what will you understand if I sing? We have learnt it with so much of hard work. We will sing only where we have to sing. We will not sing

everywhere'. Today we go in search of programs. We send CD's; send our recordings through WhatsApp and do all the electronic marketing. But, still we don't get programs. That means, those days were different.

That's how my classical music journey started. I used to go to class every day. Dandapur master used to teach me very nicely. Today the reason behind my proficiency in taal and laya is Narayanachar Dandaapur. He was very strict. He used to show us how to sing in double speed with a tala in hands. I had a very good foundation. Along with that, lakshan geet, swaravat and raagas started. At that time, I used to sing in A# pitch. As I had a good voice, a touch of classical music made it stronger. I was a bright student. I had good teacher, good samskar and a good environment. Therefore Chidambar mahaswami's bhajans form the base for my classical music and I was very fortunate to learn classical music on the foundation of Bhakti.

Dattatreya : *Later on, did you go to learn from Tammanna Gurav ji?*

Guruji : First I learnt at Dharmartha Sangeet Pathashala. My elder brother Shivanna was very affectionate towards me. He wanted to make me a good vocalist. There is a Shiva temple in Someshwara of Dharwad. He used to make me sing in that temple quite often. Whenever I sang there, my voice sounded different. And he used to tell "See! Your voice should become like this. You should be able to sing without mic." Encouragement and support from many such people enrich and contribute a person to become an artiste.

Shivanna got a job in Belagavi. He informed everybody at home that he would take me to Belagavi along with him. At Belagavi, we stayed in a room. Each month we spent five rupees for rent and nine rupees for food. My brother's salary was 22 rupees. About six months later, he told me, "I will take you to a music school in Ramadevara galli. There is a musician by name Tammanna Gurav ji who sings very well. I will enroll you there. This too belongs to Dharmartha". At that time, I was in my 3rd standard.

Whenever Tammanna Gurav ji taught “Jaya Mana Mohana Shyama Murari” I used to think why they used Khatka-Murki everywhere. I did not like that style of singing. So, my master called my brother and told him to enrol me back in the Dharwad’s Dharmartha Sangeet pathashala. After a year, I came back to Dharwad and continued learning at Dharmartha Sangeet pathashala for two years

Dattatreya : *Guruji, after your basic musical education, how did you start learning music from Narayana Rao Mujumdar ji?*

Guruji : It is quite hard to find a good teacher who is also a good vocalist. There are good vocalists. But they lack that special interest towards teaching. They go only for performance. When it came to a good teacher who is also a good vocalist, I heard that Narayana Rao Mujumdar was very famous in Dharwad. My father took me to him. He asked me to sing something. I sang one Raga. After listening, he affirmed to teach me and asked me to come weekly once.

On a good day, after offering puja, I started learning music from him. I learnt 15-16 ragas from him so well that I could present them on stage. Then I started giving concerts. Mujumdar’s taal, laya and the grammar of the ragas were perfect. He never got anxious about anyone who accompanied him on tabla. He would say that, every time if a new tablist accompanied him, it would make the concert more interesting. The tablist might play any number of bols or chakradhars or tihayis, Master never used to get disturbed. I was always in the forefront among all the students of Narayana Rao Mujumdar Master’s group. Whenever he started a class, he used to remember and tell us the way his Guru, Gayanacharya Gururao Deshpande, taught him; how he would compose taans, how he would expand a raga. We used to think “when our Guru sings like this, how his Guru might have been singing? And where is he now?” Today who remembers their Gurus before starting teaching?

Once my master told me, “around 1950-51, Akashwani of Dharwad was started. Before that, all artistes used to go to Mumbai to sing. There was no Akashwani centre located here earlier. But, after it was

started they were looking for someone to head the music section. They wanted a person who could manage and conduct the artistes, who had sound knowledge of music, administration and who knew English too. At last, after searching, Gururao Deshpande was identified and thought to be fit for this music producer post. Then, Gururao joined Akashwani”. In Akashwani, officials get transferred once in three years. Like wise, Gururao ji also served in Cuttack, Mumbai, Pune and again came back to Dharwad.

Gururao ji’s house was half a kilometre away from Mujumdar’s house. Coming to his shishya’s house was very common. He used to ask “how are you Narayana?” that was the care that he had towards his shishya. He was very proud that his shishya is taking forward his music. He never used to express that openly but he had a concern. Narayana master was afraid of Gururao ji. In those olden days, to be afraid meant to have fear with respect. Once, when he had come over to master’s house, I was singing. Master bowed to him and asked me to stop. But, then Gururao ji told “Narayana, you are a singer and even I am a singer. So why did you stop him from singing? Let him sing.” “And who is he?” then Master told “He is Vinayak Torvi. His father does keertans. From 4-5 years he is learning music from me. When Gururao ji asked me to sing, I did not get scared. I started to sing. Master himself accompanied me on Tabla. Nobody used to come for accompaniment. Sometimes, he used only ‘dagga’ for playing and sometimes he used both tabla and dagga

Gururao ji sat and listened to me. Meanwhile tea was served. Then I bowed to him. He stood up to leave. Then, he called my Guru Narayana Rao and told “Narayana, send him to me. I will teach him.” Seeing his face become gloomy, Gururao ji asked “why did your face become dull? Let him give fees to you only. I will teach him.” Gururao ji’s intention was to help both the shishyas. He told “you have taught him till BA. I will make him do MA and PhD. He will be my shishya and your shishya also. Then Narayana Mujumdar master told “what a good fortune Torvi has!”

On one day I asked my master “May I go to Gururao ji?” I felt very sad to leave my master. My master told “My Guruji, Gururao ji is a genius. You are so fortunate that Guruji himself called you. Many people discontinued learning from Guruji due to his strict nature. If you stay there, you will be a great artiste”. At last, after taking a leaving certificate from Narayanarao Mujumdar as they take in school, I went to Guruji’s house. At that time Gururao ji was around 62-63 years old. We plan our life for years but in front of God’s plan our plan is nothing. I am so fortunate a Guru selected a shishya. Normally shishya will be in search of a Guru. By the grace of Chidambara mahaswamy and my parents’ blessings, I got that golden opportunity to learn from Gururao Deshpande ji (Guruji).

Guruji had a daughter named Vijaya Lingsuru and a sister named Sharakka. At that time, Guruji still had the job. I joined Guruji’s Gurukula. Every day, at 9 in the morning, my duty was to go to Akashwani along with Guruji. He used to go in a Tonga (Horse-driven cart) and I used to follow him in cycle. I didn’t understand why I was going along with him to Akashwani. Maybe he was checking my commitment towards music. From there I used to go to my house. Then again at 3 pm, I had to go to his place.

I could never attend school regularly. I always went to Navalagunda, Naragunda, Ulligeri, Betsuru and Murugodu, with my father, for Keertans and puranas. Every year during February-March, headmaster used to tell Shivanna “he doesn’t come regularly to school and has failed in all the exams but has scored well in Kannada.” And he would ask, “What should we do Torvijji?” Then Shivanna would tell “he is still small sir, and he even sings. We will make him study next year.” Then they used to promote me. I had been promoted till 9th standard like this. But how will they promote me in tenth? There was a serious meeting in our house. That year I was appearing for metric (SSLC) exam. Others suggested my father, not to take me to his keertans. Like this, they made me study. With much difficulty I started to study from the beginning and sat for the exam. At the time of result, my elder brother saw the results, came home and as they

had thought, I had failed. At that time, Science, Social studies and maths were grouped as one and if you fail in one, you have to re-write for all the three subjects. And I had failed in Science with 26 marks. But at home, it was a celebration. Because, this time, I had failed in only one subject, unlike usual, where I used to pass in one and fail in all the others. Shivanna bought Jalebis and distributed to everyone after offering it to Chidambara Mahaswami. Later, I wrote the re-exam and passed with exact 35 marks.

After I passed SSLC, I went to Guruji and told him “I want to pursue only music and studying is very difficult for me. Hearing that my Guruji told “you have to go to college” I said that I cannot go to college. Then he asked me to call my father and told my father “I will teach him music only if he goes to college.” Then my parents started thinking that I will not get job if I take up Arts. If I take commerce then I will get jobs easily. There were no commerce colleges in Dharwad. So, we had to go to Hubli in train. At last, all of them enrolled me to Commerce stream.

There was a Commerce College located at Unkal. I used to travel to railway station on bicycle. Then I would keep my bicycle in the railway station and would take a train to Unkal. The classes at college would end by 2 or 3 pm and the return train was at 6 pm. There was a cremation ground between our college and the railway station where I would spend my time watching the activities at the cremation ground as to whose skull busted or whose skull flew away. Then after returning home I would go to Guruji’s place. I have offered all types of sevas at Guruji’s place from sweeping, removing grass in the garden, cleaning the bathroom, washing clothes, fetching grocery etc. I was a qualified servant at their house. For beetle nuts or leaves, I was supposed to go a particular seller who sat in a particular place on Tuesdays and had a yellow turban on his head. Guruji was so particular. His personality was not that easy to handle. He was a very disciplined person. You would always find him wearing a white dhoti with a white shirt and a black coat.

Prahlad Mahishi, a retired chief secretary of Dharwad, once told me “Torvi, Gururao’s power of knowledge was tremendous. Whenever he walked with a Gandhi suit, a Gandhi cap and a stick in his hand, everyone unknowingly made way for him”. Bhimsen Joshi used to tell “Gururao is like a clock.” For three years, I went to Gururao’s house daily, doing all the seva and returning home. For three years, after doing seva at Gururao’s house, I used to come home exhausted. There were no family functions, no special occasions, and no festivals. It was like my family had given up on me.

Dattatreya : *During those three years, how was your state of mind? Did you think why Gururao is not teaching you or why you had gone there?*

Gururao : We were smart, but, smartness never worked before him. How should we practice at home? If he teaches, only then we can practice. So, practice stopped completely. I didn’t know why I was going to his house. Was it attachment or attraction? I didn’t know. It happened so, that, in the morning, the body automatically took the route to Gururao’s house. He was very strict. If I sat, he would ask, ‘why did you sit?’, if I stand, he would ask, ‘why did you stand up? Even if his words were contradictory; even if he told east is west or west to be east, I used to be quiet. First, I stopped speaking in Gururao’s house. Then I learnt to sit on the mat for three to four hours. I just listened to whatever he told, I never reacted. Sometimes he would ask ‘why are you sitting still like a rock? Speak something.’ But, what will I speak in front of him? He had such a dynamic personality. He had mastery over Sanskrit, Astrology, Music and Kannada literature. He was well-versed in Kumara Vyasa Bharatha and Lakshmeesha Bharatha. He had given Gamaka (a popular art form in Karnataka) programs. He had a title “Gamaka Gaurishankara”. He was a disciple of a great Gamaka artiste of that period, Bharatha Binduraya. For years, Gururao used to sing the Kumaravyasa Bharatha in the temple of Vithobadeva and, Betigeri Krishna Sharma, a literary figure used to explain the meaning. Gururao used to sing it in different ragas. Gururao Deshpande was the first person to popularise Gamaka in Hindustani

style. He had many disciples who learnt Gamaka from him. Whenever he sang in Vithoba temple thousands of people used to gather. Many musicians and writers used to come. I have listened this for many years. Jnana-peetha awardee Sir D.R. Bendre used to come to Gururao’s house. Regular discussions and debates would take place between them.

Gururao had a great command over English literature. He used to study works of Wordsworth, Milton, Shakespeare, etc. He was also a great spiritualist. He used to read Dasabodha, ‘manache shlok’ and Jnaneshwari daily. He used to tell about Jesus very often. He would ask “Do you know why Jesus is great?” And tell us “When Jesus was being crucified and nailed in his legs, he did not blame the people who were crucifying, but prayed - Father, forgive them, for they know not what they are doing”. Like this, he was an expert in all the subjects. So how can I speak in front of him? I sat quietly. It was my good fortune that I got him as my Guru.

But, in those three years, I was not taught any music. At home, when they asked which raga I was taught that day, I would tell “He has not started teaching yet.” Then they used to tell “Why do you go there then? Leave that place. You can resume learning from Mujumdar master.” But, because of Gururao’s extraordinary charisma, I used to go there daily. I didn’t know the purpose. I didn’t have the ambition or the interest to become a musician at that time. Yet I did not feel like I was wasting my precious time. Like this, for three years, I was just going to Gururao’s house and did all the seva. Seeing this, his daughter became angry and asked Gururao “Father, you brought him here from Narayanappa to teach him music. When will you teach him? What should he tell at home? At this, Gururao became very angry and said “He has come here to learn and I have brought him here to teach. Why are you worrying about it?”

Generally, Gururao used to practice daily. Tabla artistes used to come. Always Narayana Rao Mujumdar sir would accompany on one tanpura

and I would be on the other. Guruji used to sing a variety of ragas like Kafi Kanada, Raisa Kanada and Basanti Kedar, etc. After the music session I would go to a nearby hanuman temple and would write down the notations.

One day suddenly Guruji asked me to take the Tanpura. What a special moment that was! I couldn't believe it. It was the first time I was holding the tanpura for my own class. He started teaching me Yaman.

Dattatreya : *Now, when you think about those three years, do you feel that Guruji had some purpose behind that?*

Guruji : After many years of learning from Guruji, slowly I was able to analyse his music. After 8-10 years of rigorous training from Guruji, I got to know what a genius musician he was. I felt the swara patterns and the quality of swaras to be amazing. Initially, I didn't have the capacity to think. But I felt one thing that since he wanted me to unlearn whatever I had learnt earlier, he didn't teach me for three years. Narayanarao Mujumdar's singing style was influenced much by Gwalior Gharana. And Gururao Deshpande ji's music was influenced by many different Gharanas. Faiyaz Khan was Guruji's favourite vocalist. Faiyaz Khan's singing had influenced Guruji's singing. Vilayat Hussain Khan Saheb was our Guruji's friend. He used to stay at Guruji's house whenever he came to Dharwad for Akashwani recording. Abdul Kareem Khan Saheb used to frequently perform in Mysore. On the way he would stay at Dharwad for few days. Whenever he was in Dharwad, he used to give concerts. At that time, my Guruji used to accompany on the Tanpura. Therefore, even Kirana Gharana style also had an influence on Guruji.

My Guruji had influence of many great musicians of different Gharanas like Abdul Kareem Khan Saheb, Faiyaz Khan Saheb, Vilayat Hussain Khan Saheb, Alladiya Khan Saheb (Manji Khan saheb's father and Guru), Kesarbai Kerkar. Therefore, with age, our Guruji's style of singing also transformed. His old natural style was nice, but when gold is put together with copper it improves the properties of gold and gold

becomes hard and glossier. Likewise, by taking good ideas from different Gharanas, my Guruji's music became even more wonderful.

Likewise, he would have decided to teach me such transformed music. So he would have thought 'let him unlearn first or else what Narayana has taught and what I am teaching might clash'. The very first thing that he taught me was the discipline, 'How to behave in Guruji's house'. If I sat for practice, I had to sit without shaking our legs. If I shook a little bit he would ask "Why Torvi, is it time for you to go? I was not supposed to look here and there. He would ask "Why are you seeing there? Why are you seeing here? I didn't know why I went there or how time went. But without Guru we cannot even exist. He is not a person, he is a phenomenon.

Dattatreya : *Would you observe his style and the way he conversed?*

Guruji : Yes, because whatever he spoke had some meaning and truth. I had to listen to him quietly. He used to describe about one singing style (gayki). One day he referred to a singer of Jaipur Gharana and explained how good their gayki was. Then he pointed out the differences between the two styles. He used to explain other gaykis too.

Dattatreya : *This can also be a way of imparting Samskara, isn't it Guruji?*

Guruji : Even I feel so, or else why will Guruji waste my three years at that age? It was not that I was incompetent; he brought me from Mujumdar Master's place because I was competent. Many people came to him and told, "Gururao ji, we sent our children to school, they didn't study; we put them in sports they didn't play. Therefore, we have brought them here so that at least they learn music". For that, Guruji used to tell, "If everything comes, music will come. They should study and also play then only they will be able to learn music. Music can be learnt only by intelligent people".

My Gurubhagini, Lata Nadiger, sings very well. She has served Guruji to a greater extent. She would cook well and help in the kitchen.

When her class was going on, I would make tea and arrange the vessels. But, I was doing everything very slowly. Because, if I would complete all my work quickly, Guruji would ask me to go home. Since I got to listen to music when Guruji was teaching her, I would do all the work unhurriedly. When I remember it now, I feel how amazing was the time then. The experiences, when I was with Guruji, were marvellous. We didn't know how to analyse all this at that time. Those conversations and musical experiences cannot be described. Many people try to describe Gururao ji and Bhimsen Joshi ji. But, nobody can describe them. It is said "gaganam gaganaakaaram saagarah saagaropamah", for the Sky, sky itself is comparable; for Ocean, ocean itself is comparable. What examples can you give? For Bhimsen Joshiji's music, Bhimsen Joshiji himself is an example; for Gururao Deshpande's music, Gururao Deshpande himself is an example. My Guruji used to sing a raga with the help of just 2-3 notes, that is like showing sindhu in bindu. His music touched heart, intellect and mind.

He started to teach Yaman and Bihag. It could have gone for years together. He used to teach only for fifteen to twenty minutes. Because he knew how much I can grasp. He would tell, "grasp only how much I teach you". More or less he used to teach me in black five. In class, I used to sing in black five. But, at home, when I would practice in black two, that picture or the feel of the raga, which I got in class, would never appear. One day when I asked about it, he told, "You will get to know about it later."

There were many female students including his three daughters, Sunanda Kadapa, Vijaya Lingsuru and Mala Deekshith who took training under him. He taught Lata Nadiger and Ratnaprabha Joshi. He taught all of them in black five. So, he used to teach me also in black five.

Guruji used to teach clusters in a Raga. Clusters were made by a few phrases of that Raga. I was very young then. He daily taught the same things so, I often wondered how I should learn and expand it. I used to sing tans, boltans, notations, etc but after joining here everything

had stopped. I became skeptical and had thoughts that, since Guruji is aging, he might have lost interest in teaching, so he is teaching me like this. Now I understand that, at that time, he taught me clusters in Bihag. It was a circle and that circle had five routes. I had to search where Bihag was; which meant that developing the ability to create and expand music itself is learning music. If he simply taught me that after 'ma' I have to sing 'ga', I would not get to know why he would sing 'ma' there or why he would sing 'ga' there. Even if he sang less, he used to teach me how to use my own creativity in it.

He used to teach us how much each note contributes to a Raga. What does 'nishad' contribute; what 'dhaivath' contributes, etc. We felt that we have to practice for 30 years to sing that much. He would tell, 'Sing like this, your voice must be flexible. Voice should be like potter's clay. A potter can create any design using that clay. Like that, if we have a good and flexible voice, we will be able to sing all the thoughts or combinations that come to our mind. There should not be any difficulty while singing. While singing you have to sing with joy. Music should have a combination of emotions and intelligence. If there is only intelligence, it might become boring. We have to study the theory very deeply. Only then we will feel the music to be pleasant. But, only theory is not enough. Our music should reach even the common people. Common people don't have special knowledge about Raga-Ragini. Our music should be pleasant to both connoisseurs' and common listeners' hearts.

I will share an experience of mine. When I sang in front of thousands of people in the Gwalior Tansen Sangeet festival, many people felt so happy that they had tears in their eyes out of bliss. They said that they had never heard such music for many years and they said they could see a blend of Kirana, Gwalior and Agra Gharanas in my music. Later they called me once again. When I was going there the taxi driver told "I still remember the music which you sang three years back".

Guruji stayed in our house in Bangalore for few days. It was a small house. At that time, my mother and my wife have served Guruji. He felt very happy and while leaving, he bowed to my father. My father was 3-4 years younger to him. Then Guruji told “I did not bow to you. I bowed to the Chidambar mahaswami inside you. My ancestor Narendra Deshpande was left with nothing, as all his agricultural lands were occupied by the Muslims. At that time, Chidambar Mahaswami helped him get back the lands. So, even today we have dedicated the yield of one yard to Chidambar Mahaswami Utsava. So I bowed to the Chidambar Mahaswami sitting inside you”. After that, my father bowed to him. Then my mother, who was very clever, without any hesitation asked Guruji “Guruji, please don’t think otherwise, you stayed here for a month. It would have been good if you had taught him a new raga”. Look at her courage. Even my father was afraid of telling that to Guruji, but, my mother directly told him. Then Guruji told my mother “Ansakka, what will you do with one new raga? Let him sing in front of ten thousand people, his music will be excellent. I have taught him in such a way”. Learning hundreds of ragas is not important. The depth or the richness in one raga is important, because, music is not static. Ragas are eternal. That’s the reason he told that to my mother. In this way, I learnt 20-25 ragas from Guruji.

Dattatreya : *Guruji, you told, you were taught only for twenty minutes. Later, how did you expand it so much? How did you get the vision to expand a raga?*

Guruji : The way of teaching us was like that. It was not like how we teach you now. Now we tell about segments like introductory aalap, badath aalap, different types of taans, layakari, what uttaranga and poorvanga ragas are like. Back then, my Guruji used to sow the seed of creativity in our music. He would tell “I have taught you this. Now, you have to put your ideas in and develop it.” He taught us ‘clusters’ (a combination of notes which portray/ picturize a raga). He would leave us to develop wherever it could be developed. During those days, this was the way we were taught. Sawai Gandharva ji

did not teach Bhimsen Joshi ji for four hours. Guruji taught us a way to think. That is how it was possible for us to develop it. We sing many ragas, exactly the way how he used to sing, which Guruji did not even teach us. For such ragas, we developed it by imagining how Guruji would have sung it. He taught us how a note should be sung, how one should go from one note to another; what nyasa swara, kan swara, meend, andolan, gamak, khatka, murki, etc., were. He taught us all of this in one raga as a human figure. It might be Dattatreya, Shrinath or Aditya. All of them have the five senses. But, why aren’t their noses, eyes and ears alike? Why do different people look different? It is because Brahma has created like that. Music is a Brahma vidya. We should become like Brahma. We should create and develop ragas the same way how Brahma creates human beings. Like this, he taught me 15-20 ragas in a detailed way by making clusters. He would say “If you learn this much properly, you can sing hundreds of ragas”.

Dattatreya : *Bade Guruji originally learnt from Gwalior Gharana doyen, Ramakrishnabua Vaze ji. But, we can see influence of many Gharanas in his Bade Guruji’s gayki. How do you analyse this?*

Guruji : My Guruji was not only a musician. His hold on literature was also excellent and he was a very knowledgeable person. Bhimsen Joshi ji, while addressing the audience at the function of 10th anniversary of Gururao Deshpande Sangeet Sabha, told “Gururao Deshpande ji was a genius artiste”. His geniusness was not only in music. He was educated. He did F.I. Inter in those days. His father wanted to make him a lawyer but he ran away from his house to learn music and did not do law. That’s why, whether it is music or literature, he went deeper into it. He was a very able administrator in Akashwani. He started innovative programs. Everywhere there was something new. For people, who want to see novelty, it is difficult to limit them to one Gharana. For them there is a beginning for music but there is no end for it. Art is like flowing water. Nothing is stagnant there. It may change through Gharana or through a person. It

may change according to the time. This had greatly influenced him, hence he would not consider any particular Gharana or music to be the best.

Those days witnessed many eminent luminary vocalists like Bhaskar Bua Bakhale, Faiyaz Khan, Dullekhan, Shankar Krishna Pandit, Ramakrishna Ichalakaranjekar, Abdul Kareem Khan, etc. All of them took forward their own style of music. Now, somebody else would be pioneering Agra Gharana, but it was Faiyaz Khan Saheb who gave it an excellent form.

For instance, Ramkali, a Gwalior raga; Guruji would analyse how Gwalior gharana vocalists presented it; how Kirana Gharana or Agra Gharana or Jaipur gharana vocalists would sing it. We generally observe that Kirana Gharana artistes search swaras in swara, laya in laya. It is an Aalapi Gharana. In Jaipur Gharana, they sing complex ragas and Anavat ragas like Nayaki Kanada, Basanti Kedar, Nat Bihag, Nat Kamod, Bhoop Nat, Sampurna Malkouns, Pancham Malkouns and Bahadduri todi etc. along with Yaman, Bhoop and Bihag. They took all these ragas and popularised them in their own style. While, in Agra Gharana, they have a special structure of notes; their style of pronouncing notes and the style of layakari are different. They emphasize on the raga bhava. They sing the Bandish in a very clear and understandable way. Then, in Gwalior Gharana, vocalists sing any raga effortlessly and uninterruptedly in aakar. Gwalior is a moola Gharana. It is said that all the others Gharanas emerged out of Gwalior Gharana. After coming out of Gwalior Gharana, they settled in different areas and adopted their own style and have become distinctive. It is like how we have different paths in spirituality. Spiritual Gurus like Ramana Maharshi, Ramakrishna Pramahansa, Ramadasa, Brahma Chaitanya Maharaj, Shankaracharya, Madhwacharya, Ramanujacharya showed us how the salvation can be attained through different ways. Like this, intelligent people don't stick to single Gharana or single music style; and Gururao ji is one of them. When Guruji was learning from Ramakrishna Vaze Bua, he was also attracted by Manji Khan (Alladiya Khan's son) who used to sing very well.

I will narrate you one incident that happened in Kolhapur. In Kolhapur, once Ustad Abdul Hafiz Ali Khan's (Amjad Ali Khan's father) program was organised at Ustad Alladiya Khan's place. Hafiz Khan was an excellent Sarod player. It was before 1951. At that time, since Akashwani was not there in Dharwad, my Guruji had to go to Mumbai to sing. When he had been to Mumbai he got to know that Alladiya Khan Saheb's program was organized in Kolhapur. With the intention to listen to him, he came over to Kolhapur. Alladiya Khan Saheb was a very strict old man. Only those who were invited could attend the program.

Once Guruji told me "Those days were like that, Torvi. For example, Kesarbai Kerkar was a great artiste. She was supposed to be informed in advance, who all would come to listen to her music, a day before the program. She was an artiste who used to choose her audience. If we sing Bhoop in front of people who know nothing, they might think that it's Shuddh Kalyan. If they don't understand the difference between Bhoop and Shuddh Kalyan why should I sing in front of them? Or for instance, for a popular raga like Yaman kalyan, which everybody knows, there is a possibility of comparing the way different artistes present that raga; How Faiyaz Khan sings; how Kesarbai Kerkar sings that raga; or else there will be no difference in everyone's singing. One must be analytical. The audience used to analyse whose alap was nice; whose Badath alap was nice; whether they sing Layakari and taan variety in all the octaves; which Gharana has contributed to which part of music etc. In this way, only the people who enjoyed the music had the chance to attend the programs".

So, my Guruji, who wanted to listen to Ustad Abdul Hafiz Ali Khan, did not have any invitation. But Manji Khan Saheb had special affection towards Guruji. Even Gururao Deshpande ji saw him as a great vocalist and also as a Guru. It was through Manji Khan Saheb's reference, Guruji got an opportunity to go there. Hafiz Ali Khan Saheb had to come from Mumbai. The program was scheduled at 6 pm in the evening. Alladiya Khan Saheb was so strict that all the audience had gathered there by 5-5:30 pm itself. Only those who were in-

vited were allowed to come and not otherwise. You cannot come and listen whenever you want. You cannot leave in between or after one raga. In those days, if one concert started, they used to close the doors. No one could enter or exit in between. They worshipped music in the same way they worshipped God. No doubt, that in music, entertainment is must. Without that it doesn't reach people. But only entertainment is not the main part.

When the program was about to start, Alladiya Khan Saheb received a chit from Hafiz Ali Khan Saheb which said, "I'm coming from Mumbai. I met with some obstruction so I will be one hour late." Alladiya Khan Saheb became upset and called Manji Khan Saheb and told "The main artiste might take one hour to come. So many people have come, the tabla artiste has come, and the tanpura and everything is ready. What should we do now?" Then Manji Khan told "I have an idea, here one boy named Gururao has come from Dharwad to attend the program. He sings very well. I have listened to his music. Hearing this Alladiya Khan Saheb asked, "What are you telling? Is he capable of singing in front this audience?" Manji Khan said "I feel that he can sing." Alladiya Khan Saheb agreed and called my Guruji. Guruji offered salutations to Alladiya Khan Saheb. Then Manji Khan asked my Guruji to sing. At that time, my Guruji thought 'how shall I sing in front of Alladiya Khan Saheb, Manji Khan Saheb and such a big audience. I will sing but if they don't find it appreciating it will bring disrepute to my Guruji'. Prostrating to the Guru in his mind, Guruji started the program with a firm mind. He could have sung Yaman or Bhoop. But, see his cleverness, he sang Nat Bihag, because, it is Jaipur Gharana's raga. Within first ten minutes, assuming it to be his test, he started singing without any hesitation. Alladiya Khan stood up from the seat and said "Beta bahut accha ga rahe ho. Tereko gaane mein aankh hai. Wah! Wah! (Boy, you are singing very well, you have a good vision in music. Wah! Wah!" He said this 3-4 times. There was a huge applause. How excellently he would have sung? Alladiya Khan called his son and told "Manji, he is singing very well, whose disciple is he?" Manji Khan told, "Father, he is Ramakrishna Vaze Bua's disciple". Then

Alladiya Khan asked "Then, how come there is our Gharana's music style in his music?" For that, Manji Khan replied "He has great regard towards me and has considered me as his Guru. He listens to my music very much." Then Alladiya Khan told "let him be Ramakrishna Vaze Bua's disciple. But, he sings our style of music, so make him your disciple as early as possible". Guruji sang very well and got everybody's blessings. Then, after Hafiz Ali Khan's program, Manji Khan called my Guruji. Manji Khan was around 30-32 years old and my Guruji was 25. He told Guruji "Your today's program was excellent. So, let our Gharana's music training happen to you, this is my father's instruction". My Guruji was so happy that he thought "If Khan Saheb himself wants to teach me music, how blessed am I!" Later, after coming to Dharwad my Guruji thought "Manji Khan is 32 years old and Ramakrishna Bua is 70 years old. Since I am his senior disciple, if I leave him and go there now, it will be a Gurudroha. As Manji Khan is still younger, I will go to him after Bua ji". He thought of telling this to Manji Khan. But, after some days Manji Khan who was a forest officer died prematurely. So Guruji couldn't become a disciple of Manji Khan. Still he considered him as his Guru. If you like one style of music it will come to you even without learning. That's why nobody used to sing in front of such talented singers, because, they can grasp that music just by listening to it only once. I am telling this because even if he was in Gwalior Gharana he took the special elements of Jaipur Gharana. My Guruji used to say that Manji Khan's voice was as open, sweet and loud as Abdul Kareem Khan Saheb. That's why Manji Khan was a great vocalist. My Guruji was greatly influenced by him and also Faiyaz Khan. Once, in a program in Mumbai, Faiyaz Khan told "Many people sing Yaman, now I will sing this raga". My Guruji told to me that Faiyaz Khan sang wonderfully that day. My Guruji had uniqueness in his music. He never sang all the ragas in a similar way. How one should sing Yaman or Kedar, Kamod, Chayanat, Hamir etc? How should be our mind set when we sing uttarang Pradhan ragas like, Sohani, Basant, and Shankara? When you say Aalapi Gharana and stay on one note for hours while singing it, impression of the raga will no more exist. Some of the ragas are phrase-oriented.

If you stay on 'Sa' 'Re' 'Ma' for too long it cannot become Kedar. Some ragas have more of taan element. A particular tempo is suitable for a particular raga. If it is sung in that particular tempo it will be good to listen to. If I keep slow tempo of Vilambit for Multani, the raga will not sound good. An artiste should know how to present a raga according to that day's time, accompanying artistes and the audience. That's why, what my Guruji did was, he analysed the specialities of different Gharanas, how different Gawais have modulated it, how they have sung it, whereall they can bring out the rasa. There should be rasa in laya and taans also. In this way, my Guruji's music was complete by itself and had every element of music in it.

Guruji used to create an atmosphere of Bageshri within three minutes. He studied how different Gharanas emphasized on certain elements and developed their style.

Dattatreya : *Have you listened to Bade Guruji's live concerts?*

Guruji : When I joined Guruji, he was giving very less programs. My Guruji thought that until one maintains his standards, he can perform. He was not ready to accept the comments like "earlier, he used to sing very well, now he has become old". It was enough for him that people told him "nobody else can sing like that" after listening to his Shuddh Kalyan sung in 1956. If some of his seriously talented students tell him to practice music, think about music; he would tell "there is retirement for everything". My Guruji had retired very early.

There is a music department in Karnataka College. I was doing my Bachelor of Music there. There was a felicitation program for my Guruji. At that time, Sharada Hangal was the principal of the college. The program was at 4 pm. Narayanrao Mujumdar and myself sat for Tanpura support. For the first time, I played tanpura for Gururao Deshpande ji in that Music College. That day he sang Multani. I couldn't describe or even entirely understand how and what he sang. We had to just learn. It was a different experience to listen from stage. So, I have attended some of his concerts. He used to develop a raga

according to its personality. Every raga has its own personality. He would create the atmosphere of Kedar within 2 minutes. He would sing Todi very elaborately. He never used to sing all the ragas in the same way.

Dattatreya : *Whenever you met Mansurji, Gangubai ji, Bhimsen Joshi ji or Basavaraj Rajguru ji, would they tell you about Bade Guruji and his music?*

Guruji : I was doing my B.Music. Mansur ji's program was organised. When he came, I was introduced as Gururao ji's disciple. That day, I accompanied him on the Tanpura. After singing one Raga, when Mansurji came out to smoke, he asked "So you are learning from Gururao ji?" and told "Learn better from him, He doesn't teach easily; Earlier generation of masters don't impart knowledge that easily. He is a great vocalist. So learn with determination from him." Mansurji had respect towards Guruji's music. He used to come to Guruji's house many a times for suggestions and clarifications. Their association was very good. Munsurji has told to me about Gururao ji's music several times.

Gangubai ji was also very close to Guruji. She used to tell that Guruji was like a father to her. He never taught easily. Old people are like that. They think several times to give even 1 Rupee.

He was not giving his hard earned music for free. If his daughter asked him "Why do you make Torvi work so hard?" he would ask "Who asked him to come here? Who asked him to do all the work? He is doing it voluntarily. He is getting music so effortlessly; he should have been in our times. Do you know what all my Guruji Ramakrishna Bua Vaze did? His Guru was a Muslim. He had to go to market, bring Chicken-Mutton. He had to cook and serve him and later go to his house, put on his sacred thread and have Dal and Rice". He would tell that all of us are getting music very easily.

Later, after Guruji passed away, Gangubai ji came to Bangalore and sang beautifully in the program organised in memory of Gururao

Deshpande. At that occasion when she told “I have to sing well otherwise Guruji will not forgive me.” Her eyes were full of tears. Next day, the newspapers read “Masterly tribute to the master.”

Basavaraj Rajguru ji told me “Your Guruji used to work in Vaman Rao Company in Davanagere. In the drama, he would play the role of Arjuna. It was wonderful when he held the bow and arrows in his hand and sang the Kannada natyageet “Komale... Shubhangiye... Susheele...” and “Manasa nittihalu baale”. I didn’t have money to buy ticket. Rajguru ji told “Torvi, Guruji was a wonderful singer. I have once even stood outside the tent to listen to his program. I used to wait for his concerts and listen keenly”.

Then at another occasion, Art circle of Hubli had organised a conference. Basavaraj Rajguru ji’s program was organised in the evening. Gangubai ji, Gururao ji were sitting in front of him. He sang Durga very beautifully. After the concert, seeing Gururao ji, Basavaraj Rajguru ji came down the stage to bow to him. At that time, even Gururao ji went near the stage and said “Basavanni (he used to call him this out of affection), listening to your today’s music I remembered Abdul Kareem Khan Saheb.” Then Rajguru ji immediately removed his hat off, took Gururao ji’s hand, held it above his head and told “You telling one word is similar to appreciation of thousands of people. So please bless me.” Like this, Gangubai ji, Mansur ji and Bhimsen Joshi ji also respected Gururao ji. Everybody respect good and senior artistes.

Dattatreya : *How was your experience of performing in front of Bade Guruji?*

Guruji : I have had some experiences singing in front of him. Instead of saying I performed in front of him, many a times he would give me a pleasant surprise by being among the audience. There was ITC music conference in Hubli. At that time, my Guruji had stayed in his second daughter, Mala Deekshit’s house in Hubli. Going there from Dharwad, I bowed to Guruji and said “I am singing for one hour,

Guruji”. He asked “What are you singing?” Then I said “I have planned to sing Yaman”. He affirmed and then we went to the program. Vasant Kanakapur was on Harmonium and Raghunath Nakod was on Tabla. After the curtain was raised, I saw that Guruji was sitting in the first row. I felt the same way how he had felt in front of Manji Khan Saheb. I started sweating out of panic. I didn’t know what I had to sing. My mind had become completely blank. Then announcement was made. Since the hall was packed with audience and even my brother, Chidambar, was sitting beside Guruji along with Gangubai ji, I had no other choice. With little bit of courage I sang Yaman. At that time, Guruji told to Chidambar “Your brother is singing very well, should I stand up and say ‘wah wah?’”. Gangubai ji told “Guruji, your student is singing so well.” After I finished singing, nobody came to me; everybody went to Guruji and exclaimed “How beautifully your student sang today!!” Seeing all that, I felt happy for my small effort to sing little bit of Guruji’s music.

One day I was singing Todi. Lata Nadiger was there. I was singing with so much involvement that I didn’t even notice Guruji coming. Later Lata told me “Torvi, I was watching Guruji, he had tears in his eyes. Guruji told me that I have to sing like that. Artistes should learn with Swara, Laya and Tala.” I have never seen Guruji smiling. He never used to tell me that I sang well. But I heard that he was telling it to others that I sing very well.

Dattatreya : *How was your relation with Guruji? Were you asking him about music or he himself used to tell you?*

Guruji : He used to talk very less during classes and we were afraid of him. Later, when he came to Bangalore, he told “Torvi, now the music atmosphere has changed a lot. The music which was there when I was young was very great. I don’t like the music of this time. Today’s music doesn’t feel natural. The objective and scope of music have changed. That’s why, our elders used to advise us “always maintain Classical music’s dignity and respect its structure.”

Dattatreya : *You started teaching. Did your students ever meet Bade Guruji?*

Guruji : When Guruji was there, I didn't have courage to tell that I had students. I was doing M. Music and I was working in a bank. So I couldn't attend classes properly. The way I passed MA is interesting. One day Mansur ji came to Gururao ji's house and said "Send your shishya with me. Let him study M.Music." Gururao ji replied "He is learning here, what will he do going there? Then Mansur ji told "He will sing your music only but Karnataka University has started M.Music. We need students like Torvi" and he took me with him. Then I joined MA. Amruta Halageri is my senior disciple. She had joined there. I first met her in that university. I made friendship with her and passed MA by making notes from her theory book. She was learning music from Narayanarao Mujumdar, who by that time, was aged. So her mother called me and asked to teach her. Like that I started teaching her. During classes, I used to analyse Guruji's music. I would feel how great it was. My students, Amruta, Kishor Desai of Pune and Upendra Deekshith have met Guruji and have taken his blessings.

Guruji's teaching method was such that, even if someone asks me a doubt any time, I will not have any difficulty answering him. There was no confusion anywhere. He taught us how to enter a Raga from different angles depending on that day, mood and time. That's why if one learns music from Guruji he would never have confusions in music. Such was his music. Now when my students ask me a doubt, I wonder why that question did not come to my mind. It is because I had understood the concept while Guruji was teaching me. So, I am automatically able to answer my students. The way Guruji taught was such that, I didn't have to think and answer.

When Guruji taught us, even if he taught same thing for twenty or thirty minutes, we used to go home and practice it for six to eight hours. We find Guruji's music different because he was a 'Siddha

purusha'. He had 'Siddhis' of Raga and Swara. He had gone so deep into every aspect of Gharana that we got everything readymade.

I will tell you one incident told to me by Bhimsen Joshi ji. In 1964, Bhimsen Joshi ji had organised 'Shashtabdhi' program of Gururao Deshpande ji in Pune. He had become the secretary of Gururao Deshpande Samman Samiti and had organised the program. He sat for Tanpura accompaniment in Guruji's program. Bhaskar Bua's disciple, master Krishna Rao, who was a great vocalist, proficient in singing both classical and Natyageet, had come as chief guest. That day, Narayanarao Mujumdar and Bhimsen Joshi ji also sang along with Gururao ji. Later Master Krishna Rao said "Gururao ji's music is like a garland made by collecting all precious pearls and gems found around the globe" these are the words said by such a great artiste. Gururao ji's music did not stick to one Gharana.

Keeping the originality of Gwalior Gharana intact, Guruji emphasized on the Raga bhava and added the elements like Khatka murki, singing asthaya-antra and taans and thereby made it great.

Dattatreya : *Guruji, you told about bade Guruji's connection with Jaipur, Gwalior and Agra Gharana. How was his connection with Kirana Gharana?*

Guruji : It is good that you asked this. Gururao Deshpande ji had a strong and close connection with Kirana Gharana. We all know the grand Dasara festival that happens in Mysore darbar. Since the beginning, the Maharaja of Mysore immensely encouraged cultural activities, classical music and sports. That is the greatness of Karnataka. This Dasara festival has so much reputation worldwide. That too, when Maharaja was there, he used to organize Hindustani and Carnatic classical music programs in a very grand manner. Programs of many great vocalists and instrumentalists from all over India and also from today's Pakistan were organised in this festival. Therefore all artistes used to come to Mysore. Artists like Faiyaz Khan, Nathan Khan, Abdul Kareem Khan Saheb, whose music was very popular, used to perform. They used to come to Mysore from Miraj, Kolhapur, Sangli,

etc. They had neither flights nor direct trains to Mysore. At that time, they had to come via Dharwad and Hubli. So, while coming to and returning from Mysore, Abdul Kareem Khan Saheb used to halt in Dharwad. Thus, a fan group was formed and whenever he came and halted at Dharwad, it welcomed and organized his programs.

Sawai Gandharva ji and Guruji were very good friends. Dharwad and Kundagol are very close. He used to go there very often to have discussions with Rambhau (Sawai Gandharva). Whenever Sawai Gandharva ji used to come to Dharwad he used to visit Guruji. Whenever Abdul Kareem Khan Saheb visited Dharwad, it used to be a good opportunity for Guruji to play the Tanpura for him.

Once, when Abdul Kareem Khan Saheb's program was organised, two incidents happened and both are significant for me. Gururao Deshpande ji's close friend, Ranganna Deshpande, told me this. Abdul Kareem Khan Saheb had started singing Puriya. Even after 20-30 minutes he had not finished singing Shadja and nishad. The singing was not going further. Some people in the audience started to tell "Ustad ji's music is not moving forward." This was heard by Abdul Kareem Khan Saheb and then he told "the thing is, puriya is coming out of oil right now. I am trying to take it out of ghee." Then he sang extraordinarily well. In that concert, Guruji sat for Tanpura accompaniment. At that time, they used to tune Tanpura to Pancham and Nishad. They used to tune tanpura to Shuddha Madhyam only while singing Malkouns and Lalat. If there were two tanpuras, they used to tune to Pancham and Nishad only; if only one tanpura was there they used to tune it to Pancham. That day, there was a little difference of tune between the two Shadja strings of Guruji's Tanpura. Abdul Kareem ji was singing. My Guruji thought "If I tune it now, it might disturb." Then he corrected it. Both the strings were perfectly tuned. Immediately, Abdul Kareem Khan ji said "wah! Beta accha kiya" (wah! Son, well done). That's why Tanpura players have a great responsibility. They should know its tuning perfectly. For singing, the Tanpura is like a railway track for a train. For the train to go in 80 or 130 km/hr

speed, the track needs to be strong. Or else the train will get derailed.

Dattatreya : *Ranganna was telling that, after Bade Guruji sang, Abdul Kareem Khan Saheb came to meet him. Please tell us about that incident.*

Guruji : Programs were organised in Jamakhandi during Dasara festival and Ganapathi festival. It usually used to be ten-day programs. Many artistes used to come. The royal family had so much respect and devotion towards the art and the artistes that, they used to arrange rooms, food, gifts and all other facilities to all the artistes, which you will not get even in a five-star hotel today. For ten days, from Ganesh chaturthi to Ananta chaturdashi, they kept Ganapathi and organized programs. Great artistes from all over India used to come. Abdul Kareem Khan Saheb and Bhaskar Bua Bakhale ji used to come. I shall narrate you two of the incidents that happened there. Gururao Deshpande ji used to sing in that festival. He was around 25-30 years old. He was given time to sing at ten in the morning. Abdul Kareem Khan Saheb, Sawai Gandharva ji and all stalwarts were sitting. Guruji had a wonderful voice. That day he bowed to the huge gathering, sought blessings from the elders and said "if I err somewhere the error is mine, if it comes out well, then it is Gurukrupa". Then he started singing raga Desi. After singing Desi, he sang Deshkar. He got huge applause and appreciation. Singing in front of knowledgeable audience and getting appreciation is not an easy task. Then the concert ended. Guruji was very hungry, so he offered pranams to everybody and rushed to his room to eat poha which his wife had packed for him. When he was about to eat, he heard the footsteps of someone coming towards his room. As he was seeing, he saw that it was Abdul Kareem Khan Saheb coming, holding Sawai Gandharva ji's hand. Guruji wondered whether it was a dream. Initially he got scared thinking that great artistes like them are coming to his room. But, later he became very happy and prostrated to them. Guruji thought that they came to his room by mistake. But they said "We

came to meet you only”. Then Abdul Kareem Khan Saheb told “You sang very well today. Swar, taans and laykari were wonderful. Continue singing like this and you shall become a great artiste one day”. He kept his hand on Guruji’s head and blessed him. I feel that these incidents and the words of Abdul Kareem Khan Saheb had a huge influence on my Guruji.

I will tell you another incident, from the same festival, told by my Guruji. Mojuddin Khan Saheb was a great musician. He always used to practice and think about Bhairavi. We get bored learning a raga for six months. But, in all gatherings Mojuddin Khan’s singing used to be there, and he used to always conclude with Bhairavi. Everybody used to wait to listen to his Bhairavi. That day, Mojuddin Khan sang one raga and then started Bhairavi. Within just five minutes, all the great artistes in the audience had tears of joy in their eyes. Mojuddin Khan noticed it and said “Fine, I don’t feel surprised. You are all great artistes. Everybody’s eyes are filled with tears. It is obvious to have tears. I have practiced Bhairavi my whole life. Such is its power”. The notes should become visible. There should be preparation, possibility and perfection of notes. My Guruji told “now, the one who has perfected Bhairavi is Mojuddin Khan.”

Dattatreya : *Guruji, during your Masters in Music, you had the fortune of learning from Mansur ji, Gangubai ji, Basavaraj Rajguru ji, Ramesh Nadakarni ji and Nana Sadolikar ji. Please tell us something about them.*

Guruji : Mansur ji has done great work in Dharwad. R C Hiremath was the Vice Chancellor, who was also a music lover. He told Mansur ji “Mansurji, BA music course has started; in future we should start a post-graduation course in the university. You should take the responsibility of it and head the program”. Mansur ji agreed. R C Hiremath with the permission of university started the course. I had done B.Com; I had completed B.Music and was working in bank. MA program was not there at that time. So, Mansur ji asked me to join. In the university Mansur ji was the head and along with him Gangubai Hanagal ji and Basavaraj Rajguru ji were also teachers there. It was a

difficult time for me. Here, my regular class with Gururao ji was going on which was a mix of Agra and Jaipur Gharana. There, in the university, Mansurji was from Jaipur Gharana, Gangubai ji was from Kirana Gharana and Rajguru ji was also from Kirana Gharana who sang in a different style. Moreover, Nana Sadolikar, Padmavati Saligrama and Ramesh Nadakarni were guest lecturers. So, how could I miss this opportunity? Everybody was in a guru-sthana. At that time, I was working in Canara bank, Maalamaddi branch. I had already finished 5 years of service. My work timings were from 8:30 am to 12:00 pm and from 3:30 pm till 6:30 pm. So, I was going to the university by 12:30 pm. I had requested Mansur ji to allow me to attend classes only after 12:30 pm. He said “Come whenever there is a gap for you. I will be here”. He had so much affection towards me. When I went there, all the students would have gone home, after finishing their classes. He would ask “What should I teach? Learn whatever Gururao ji has taught you. Tell any one raga from the syllabus.” I told Bhimpalas. He told “you want Bhimpalas? I will teach”. Then he taught me Bhimpalas. I learnt Bhimpalas, Jaunpuri, several compositions and used to revise sitting in front of him. Artistes like Mansur ji are very rare to find. He was extraordinary. Many a times, the common man would not have understood his music. He was a musician of Musicians. Gangubai ji would tell “Torvi, Malleshappa (Mansur ji) is taking class for you. Some or the other day come to my class also”. So, I used to attend her class on Saturdays. She used to sing Abhogi, Marwa, Marubihag, etc. Those two years were a golden time for me. Rajguru ji had special affection towards me. Even he has taught me. Gadigayya Hiremath used to accompany him on the Tabla and Rajguru ji himself played the Harmonium. He used to sing till 2 o’clock. After that I used to go home and have lunch. Then at 3 pm, I had to resume my bank job. For those two years, on one side I was learning from Gururao ji and on the other side from Mansur ji, Gangubai ji and Rajguru ji. Sometimes I would feel ‘wouldn’t it be nice if the course ran for five years! Because, once I complete the course, I will not be able to attend their classes’. At that time, I secured a rank too. Being a student, one should be proud about the knowledge gained from

his Guru. Once, when I sat for exam in the university, Mansur ji and Ramesh Nadakarni ji were the examiners. Ramesh Nadakarni was a great vocalist of Agra Gharana. He asked me to sing Shuddh Kalyan. I sang it. Then Mansur ji said “This is like Bhoop, sing Shuddh Kalyan”. “I am singing Shuddh Kalyan only Sir”, I told fearfully. When he questioned my singing two to three times, I stopped playing the tanpura and explained “Sir, I have learnt Shuddh Kalyan like this. It can be sung in three ways. SaReGaPaDhaSa SaDhaPaGaReSa, in Jaipur Gharana they sing GaPaRe, another one – SaReGaPaDhaSa SaDhaPaGaReSa where they sing Teevra Madhyam and Teevra Nishad in meend. And the third one – SaReGaPaDhaSa SaNiDhaPaMaGaReSa which means while ascending its Bhoop and while descending its Yaman. Like this it is sung in three ways”. When I said that, Mansur ji scolded, “Have you come here to take the exam or give a lecture?” Then, Nadakarni ji told “He is a small boy. Why scold him? He has been trained under you”. Then, Mansurji told “If he tells that, then it is good. I wanted him to tell that there are three styles. Even we sing in three styles”. Like this; there were some situations where I never meant to be disrespectful. I just wanted to sing in front of the senior artistes and be accepted among them.

Dattatreya : *Receiving blessings of such great people is a good fortune. Guruji, you have a good association with Kirana Gharana. S.R.A has even felicitated you with Kirana Gharana Award; Pt. Bhimsen Joshi ji came into your music life. Please tell about it.*

Guruji : The way two kidneys, two eyes, two ears and two lungs are important for a human being, both my Gurus, Gayanacharya Gururao Deshpande ji and Bharat Ratna Pt. Bhimsen Joshi ji are important to me. It is hundred percent true that I got this fortune. As I told in the very beginning, it is ‘purvajanma samskara’. It is not related to this birth. God decides much earlier; the relation of Guru and Shishya or who gets whom as his disciple.

Dattatreya : *You met Bade Guruji in Narayan Mujumdar’s house. You also met Bhimsen Joshi ji in Bade Guruji’s house.*

Guruji : Yes, there is some link between them. If I hunt back my memories, I feel surprised thinking how it happened. I didn’t recognize it then. Gururao Deshpande ji’s and Bhimsen Joshi ji’s relationship was a Guru-shishya relationship. When Joshi ji was in Gadag, Guruji was in Dharwad and also in Mumbai. Bhimsen Joshi ji loved Guruji’s music. But, he did not get the opportunity to sit face to face and learn from him. But he used to sing all the ragas of Guruji. He used to remember him and sing. I have heard it myself. Whenever he came to Dharwad, he used to visit Guruji. Many a times he has accompanied on the Tanpura for Guruji. Narayan Mujumdar ji used to sit for one Tanpura and Bhimsen ji for the other. They knew what was there in Guruji’s music. He had devotion towards Guruji. Initially, when Bhimsen Joshi ji moved to Pune, he was not that popular. In Pune, he travelled to houses on bicycle for over 10-12 years and taught music and popularized it. Bhimsen Joshi ji has put in quite a lot of hard work both in his music life as well as his personal life. He has gone in search for even one swara, one asthaya-antra; one Guru. Whenever Gururao ji was there in Pune, Joshi ji used to visit him. He used to wear a plain pyjama and a shirt. Bhimsen Joshi ji himself told me “In Pune, Guruji was the producer in Akashwani. He was well dressed and disciplined. He had such radiance. I was going to his house very often. He would ask – ‘Come Bhimu, sit. Will you have tea?’. He would go inside, prepare tea and serve. He stayed alone. Even if I said no, he would prepare and serve tea. Tea used to be excellent. He used to put very little of tea powder and prepare it with water as he used to drink tea very often. He would ask me to chew pan. He would say – ‘Bhimu, seeing your teeth I feel that you chew pan’. Then I would say ‘No sir, I take it very rarely’. Then he would give it to me and I would take it as a Guru Prasad and eat it. But it was too less. Since Gururao ji was a little aged, whenever he used to spit, he would take time to come back. During those days, I used to take two more leaves, a little more tobacco and beetle nuts. After he returned he would ask ‘so, any other news?’. I would say ‘nothing Guruji’. Then he would ask ‘tell some news and what have

you put in your mouth? Why is it difficult for you to talk?'. Escaping from him used to be the hardest". This was told by Bhimsen Joshi ji to me. Nobody should misunderstand it. Gururao ji used to give pocket money to Bhimsen Joshi ji. It is not that I am talking negative about Bhimsen Joshi ji. Gururao ji used to tell me that Gururao's and Bhimsen Joshi's relation was like a Father-son relationship. Bhimsen Joshi ji didn't have money at that time and he himself has expressed this to me. At Akashwani, if he sang for half an hour, they had to give fifty rupees and they would not give even that regularly.

Bhimsen Joshi ji once told me "Gururao ji used to give me pocket money. He would ask me to buy bread or bun and have it with tea and would ask me not to buy mirchi-bhajji or any other fried items. But I always ate mirchi-bhajji. I liked it very much. Do you know where he usually keeps money? He used to keep money in his cap. He would remove his cap and give one rupee from it. I would take that one rupee and would eat mirchi-bhajji. I was not a bun and bread eating boy". Like this Bhimsen Joshi ji shared a very cordial, affectionate relationship with Gururao and respected him as a teacher. When Gururao was 60 years old, he saw that Gururao didn't have many programs in Hubli and Dharwad. So he himself founded a committee named Gururao Deshpande Shashtabda Satkar Samiti. He became the secretary and organized an all-night program. I have told you about the All-Night Program where Bhimsen Joshi ji sang and it is that same program where Master Krishna visited. He had so much affection and respect. Gururao Deshpande ji, Bhimsen Joshi ji, Vinayak Torvi is a God-made legacy. It does not happen through search. We think that we can do everything; music doesn't flow just by sitting beside some great musician. It comes when it has to come. Everybody say that Marriages are made in heaven. Guru-shishya relationship is also made and bonded in heaven. Therefore, Gururao ji and Bhimsenji's relationship is of a teacher and disciple. Several times he has joyfully admired and expressed how well Gururao used to sing.

Dattu, I will tell you one more incident. Once I suddenly got phone call. It was around 7:30 pm. Then I heard "Torvi, I am Bhimsen speak-

ing". I asked him what the matter was. He told "Has Gururao taught you the Todi's 'barasarasati samaagahu' bandish?". I said "no Gururao, I have learnt 'garava me sanga'". He said, "You should have learnt that....then, he used to sing 'pogadirelo ranga' and natyageets, have you learnt that?". I told "I have learnt whatever he has taught. I did not dare to ask him to teach me a particular bandish. I have the recording of Gururao's 'barasarasati samaagahu'. I will copy it and send it. Immediately, I recorded it on a cassette and sent a copy of Todi sung by Gururao ji to Bhimsen Joshi ji. Bhimsen ji has actually sung that composition after listening to the cassette. Bhimsen ji was 70-75 years old. Why did he need a new bandish at that age? It was mainly due to its pleasantness. Wherever Bhimsen ji came across good music or compositions, he would adopt and apply it to his music and pass it on. Such an artiste cannot be born again. Bhimsen ji himself should be born again. I am too small to even talk about him.

***Dattatreya :** You were telling that both Gururao ji and Bhimsen ji themselves asked you to come and learn from them. Please tell more about that.*

Gururao : On December 3rd, 1982, Gururao Deshpande ji passed away. It was a big shock to me. At that time, I was transferred from Dharwad to Bangalore. I had got promotion in Canara Bank. I was working as an officer. My Gururao had stayed in his son's house in Chamarajpet. He died there. His passing away was strange. On the night before that day, the doctor had come and said that the blood circulation to his brain is very unstable. At that time, all of us, myself, Latha, my brother Chidambar, all his children had gathered in his son's house. The doctor said "He can stay like this for six months or three months or just a day". That's why we were all worried. After the doctor's visit, we all sat in his son's house that evening. Gururao was unconscious. Whenever there was little blood circulation to his brain, he would open his eyes and turn this side or that side. If not, he would be unconscious. Though he was not in coma, he was not conscious all the time. I sat there rubbing his foot. Then, Mala Deekshith, the

second daughter of Guruji said “how long will you simply sit like this? Sing something, Kaka will feel good” (she used to call her father, Kaka). What should I sing in such a situation? Guruji is on death bed; I was recurred with memories of all the moments with Guruji, since the time I joined. I have never seen him smiling. He was not a person who pampered or gave something to eat or caressed the head. His exterior personality was very tough. So, when she asked me to sing, I don’t know what I remembered, I sang Basant. ?a...NiDhaPa ?aGa?a ...Ni...Dha ?aGaReSa.

I sang this much, Guruji was unconscious. Then I stopped at Madhyam and was about to continue. Then I heard Guruji singing. When we were wondering who was singing, Guruji sang Ga?aNiDha?a ...Ga?aGaReSa and once again went to unconscious state. It was a surprise for all of us. For a split second, we couldn’t know whether we were in a dream or some illusion. Imagine our condition seeing a person who is on his death bed suddenly singing. Then Malakka told “for how long will you sit here? Go home”. Me and Chidambar returned home. But we couldn’t sleep.

Next day morning, thinking that we will go there by ten, we sat for practice. I sang Lalit and Chidambar accompanied me on Tabla. It had been half an hour after I started singing, Guruji’s nephew, Kumar, came running to our house and said “Torvi, Guruji passed away at seven in the morning”. He had sung just one day before and this happened in the morning. Then we kept our Tanpura aside and ran to their house. Then we brought a large rose garland, gave him a bath, daubed with ash and saffron and took him in a public van. There was still a glow on his face. While going, thinking that some great person is going, even strangers bowed to him from wherever they stood. After cremation, we returned home. I was totally blank thinking what to do next.

During that time, in the next 2 months there was a program of Bhimsen Joshi ji in Fort High School on the occasion of Ramotsava. Before that, Canara Bank had organised a big program for their Plati-

num Jubilee Celebration. Vocal concerts of Gangubai Hanagal ji, Mansur ji, Bhimsen Joshi ji and a veena recital by Chittibabu were organised. It was a wonderful program, during that time I got very close to Bhimsen Joshi ji. I accompanied him on the Tanpura.

I went to Airport and brought him to Woodlands. Program was scheduled on the next day. I was about to leave, but I was anxious. I was grief-stricken for losing my Guru. Whom should I tell? On whose feet should I cry? That’s why, in Spirituality they tell that if you want to bow to someone, fall at Sadguru’s feet; if you want to ask something, ask Sadguru. Don’t go and ask any random person. Like that, seeing Bhimsen ji, out of grief, I fell to his feet and cried. His feet became wet with my tears. Then he kept his hand on my head and consoled me saying “Get up Torvi, get up. Guruji passed away. I got to know. Our nation has lost a genius artiste. He was a great vocalist. I respected him as my Guru”. Then closing his eyes for a moment, he said “Calm down. Come to Pune, I will teach. I will teach you all the half-taught ragas”. See how fortunate I am. There’s a saying in our Dharwad language, ‘holige kai jari tuppada bittu’ (the sweet chapathi slipped off the hand and fell into ghee). Getting an opportunity to learn from Bhimsen ji was like that to me. Dattu, as I had told earlier, while learning from Narayan Mujumdar, Gururao ji came and selected me saying ‘I will teach you’. Now Bhimsen ji asked me to come to Pune and learn from him. Which great teachers call students like that? Even if they call how many people are eligible to go? This is all god’s will and blessings of our parents.

Bhimsen ji might have thought that since I have tolerated Gururao ji for 14-15 years, I must be pakka and not kaccha. Because, he knew that many people who went to learn from Gururao ji couldn’t tolerate him and ran away. When he called me I didn’t know what to tell. Then even his wife asked me to learn from him, at Pune.

That day, in that hotel, I felt as if I conquered heaven. On one side I had Gururao ji and on another side, Bhimsen Joshi ji. I became emotional and started stuttering. The next day the program got over. Then

my classes at Pune started. He started teaching me Yaman and Puriya Kalyan. His teaching style and Gharana were different from Gururao ji's teaching style and Gharana. He was at the top position at that time. He was 63-64 years old. He taught in the same way as how he sang in front of ten thousand people. He wouldn't keep Harmonium, but asked Bharat Kamat to accompany on the Tabla during classes.

Dattatreya : *You used to sing, and already were a graded artiste of Akashwani. How was his approach towards teaching you?*

Guruji : Bhimsen Joshi ji was a perfect performing artiste. And music doesn't come out of teaching, we should learn it. It took me 3 years of just sitting around Gururao ji, ten years of learning and practice to attain a standard. Bhimsen Joshi ji's music can be learnt only if one has that standard. People used to identify me as an artiste. I used to give programs. People liked and appreciated me; I even had disciples; I was also a Guru. Only a person like this can understand his music. Raga Miya Malhar was his favourite raga. Learning from him, Miya Malhar, learning the way the alap should be, its pronunciation, its clarity, etc., was a wonderful experience for me. He taught us in the same way how he used to sing on stage. Once the two Tanpuras started playing, Bhimsen Joshi ji used to get so involved that he would forget himself. He was always found sitting wearing a shirt and a pyjama. There were two tanpuras in his room. Sometimes, his son Shrinivas used to accompany and on other days Anand Bhate, who is a well-established artiste now, used to be there and Bharath Kamat used to be there on the Tabla. He has taught me Miya Malhar for three months. I used to go there from Bangalore very often. His clarity of the raga and the idea of presenting a note was such that he could show the picture of Miya Malhar within two minutes. Was it only voice? No, it was not just the voice. Was it only knowledge? No, it was not just the knowledge. Or was it just the practice that he had done? No, it was not just that either. Then, what was Bhimsen ji's music? Why did the whole world, the scholars, the noble men and even the common people die to hear his music?

I made an effort to understand what his music consisted of. He did not teach only phrases. What was the objective of Bhimsen Joshi ji's music? What was the motive of his pronunciation? What was his objective behind singing loudly? Then what was his range? How much did he keep the flexibility of his voice, while singing Khatka? I used to think and analyse what all changed while he presented a Murki, or sang sapat taan, firat taan or gamak taan. That pronunciation needs to be there. That tenderness needs to be there. That's why, that music has a special meaning. He would sing it once or maximum twice, then he would go forward. I listened to it very attentively. While teaching Miya Malhar, he used to teach for hours. While teaching taans he used to say "After I sing taans, you should sing taans". But I would miss two-three notes in between. He would say, "See the serial lights; from a distance, all the lights seem to be lit, but when you have closer look at it, you will find a few burnt out bulbs. Taans should not become like that. Do one thing; emphasize on the place wherever your voice slips and sing out loud. Don't keep it inside and hide it. Sing it out loud". He would ask us to practice taans and then would go out to chew tobacco. I had to practice for hours.

It has been years since he taught me this, but, it is still etched in my memory. Once I asked Guruji "I may forget after going to Bangalore, so, may I record the class? He agreed. I was fortunate enough that I recorded what he taught, the same way how students record nowadays. He would tell "sing taans in first laya and then go on increasing the tempo. Then do the alap zigzag". He was not just singing 'Nishad' but he was searching 'Nishad' in 'Nishad'. In this way, he used to search for a note in a note.

Gururao Deshpande ji used to tell "he dies for 'swara". Dying for a swara means doing immense practice to get the 'siddhi'. Some people say that if voice is good, music comes easily. Bhimsen Joshi ji's voice was very pleasant. His old recordings of Bendre ji's compositions sung along with Krishna Hangal (Daughter of Gangubai Ji) are wonderful. He has worked hard to get that special texture of voice apt for clas-

sical music. That is why, today, it may be the National Anthem or Raghupati Raghava Rajaram sung by him, people get mesmerized by his voice. He was a 'siddha purusha'.

Dattatreya : *Whom did you have more interaction with? Gururao ji or Bhimsen Joshi ji? During the class, would you ask them something, or would they tell you something?*

Guruji : I had very less interaction with Gururao ji. One reason was his age and second was for the immense respect I had. I was too small in front of him. What would you speak with him? I had a feeling that if I spoke anything, I would be wrong. So, there was very little interaction. It was a one way traffic. He used to tell, I used to listen. It was a little different with Bhimsen Joshi ji. Since I had learnt for 13-14 years under Gururao ji and was educated; was working in bank, dealt with customers, spoke English and was going all the way from Bangalore to learn, Bhimsen ji spoke more closely with me than with other students. Even I used to talk a little freely with him. I used to ask him all my doubts. Few people had started talking that since I was learning from Bhimsen Joshi ji now, will I even take Gururao ji's name, because, Bhimsen ji is very famous. But, Gururao ji was the one who gave me the vision. So I asked Bhimsen Joshi ji "Guruji, I give small programs. People ask me who I am learning from. After telling Gururao ji's name should I take your name also? If you say so I will tell". He said "You are learning from me, so take my name. What is there in taking my name?". I said "I have another doubt Guruji. I have learnt in Gwalior Gharana for ten to twelve years. The way of modulating voice and ideas are different. Here it is changing a bit. It will be a little difficult for me to sing like you". Do you know what he told suddenly? "Don't sing like me. I will not like it. Sing how you sing. Apply my music to whatever you have learnt from Gururao ji, then you will sing even better. Don't take my music as it is. Analyse the principle that is there in my music. Go deeper into my music, you will get my music". That's why, total surrender itself is, what learning or teaching is. Once I had difficulty in singing Pancham of higher

sapthak. I asked Guruji, "Guruji, how should I sing Pancham of higher octave?", to which he said "sing the ragas that don't have Madhyam in 'Uttaranga'. Sing Bhoop. That's how you should practice. If you know what is difficult for you, you should sing that first. You must get to know what is difficult for you. You will sing what is easy for you, but you should remember what is difficult; practice hard till you get it. Then take one raga and practice for fifteen days. Don't get bored. If I have to tell you about Kharaj practice, I think there is no need for you to practice Kharaj, because I have heard your voice. Not everyone's voice is alike. Each one has a different voice. A student's voice doesn't have to be the same as his Guru. I will tell you one more thing. When I was learning from Sawai Gandharva ji, I used to sing in white 4 (F pitch). While singing in white 4 in uttaranga I had to modulate my voice a little bit. Then I thought that my voice is a little different from Sawai Gandharva ji's voice. So why should I sing in white 4? So, after many years, I started singing in Black 2 (D#). Now I sing in Black 1 (C#). There is nothing like we should sing exactly like our Guruji or in the same pitch. You should sing in whichever pitch that suits you" See Dattu, now take the example of Guruji. You should know which pronunciation of his matches which note. It is not something that is inherited from our forefathers. You create your music; it should have an originality.

Mental practice has a special significance in music. I will give you one example for this. Once there was a program of Bhimsen ji in Chowdaiah Memorial hall of Bangalore. Someone told me to ask Guruji to sing Lalat since he had not sung it until then. How could I tell him? Does he tell me which raga he will sing? But, I felt like asking him. He had given me that much liberty. I was about to tell "please.... Lalat...", but he suddenly said "Hey! Hey! I will sing Todi", because, he had started thinking of Todi a day before. Like this, how much ever great the artiste might be, thought and mental practice are necessary. If the program is scheduled for the next morning, Ravishankar ji used to sit for practice the prior night, practice till six in the morning and then go to the stage and perform that raga. One

should go into that raga's mood. Like this, both, the physical and mental practice are very much essential.

Dattatreya : *Guruji, you have seen Bhimsen Joshi ji's program more closely than Bade Guruji Gayanacharya Gururao Deshpande ji's. You have accompanied him on the Tanpura as well. How were your thoughts when you accompanied him? How was his preparation for programs? Please tell something about it.*

Guruji : I have travelled with him, tuned and played the Tanpura and have sung with him for hundreds of programs. I don't get words to describe some of those experiences. That's why, Dasa Rajaram Maharaj, a great disciple and devotee of Chidambar Mahaswami says "saangu nakaa abhaavikaasi". One should not share experiences of Guru with the one who doesn't have devotion and faith in Guru. But you should praise your Guru; praise his music wherever devotion and faith are held in a high position. Then even you will prosper and also get the blessings of your Guruji. Since a musical discussion is going on now, I will share some experiences. Importantly, if Bhimsen Joshi ji had a program to perform at 6 pm he would sleep in the afternoon. Then around 5 o' clock, he used to get ready for the concert. I used to keep the pyjama and shirt ready. After wearing it, he would say "let's go" and then he would directly go to the green room. After going there, students from Pune, Hubli, and Dharwad used to be with him. It was my good fortune that, whenever Tanpura needed to be tuned he would ask them to call me. I would tune the Tanpura. Even in Sawai Gandharva mahotsav of Pune, he used to sing with four Tanpuras. There used to be ten-twenty students in the program who were blessed with Ganda Bandhan Deeksha, and many more students who were learning like ekalavya. Even I used to be there. He would ask me to tune the Tanpura. He would tell "call Torvi, let him tune". Such was his affection and belief in me. After all four tanpuras were tuned he would listen to the tanpura, keeping his eyes closed, for 2 minutes and then would go to the stage. All this was my good fortune. Guruji never used to re-tune after I had tuned the Tanpuras. If

four tanpuras were there I would think and tune how many for Pancham and how many for Nishad. Tuning in front of Guruji is not a joke, that too, in front of Bhimsen Joshi ji. But it was a training I got from Gururao Deshpande ji. 'The Tanpura's resonance should be like the sound of a fly which just flew away. The one who tunes should have tremendous knowledge of notes; should be a singer'. That was my Guruji's first lesson. So it was not difficult for me there. Especially, if Bhimsen ji tuned the Tanpura one could know that he has only tuned it. If you listen to one of Bhimsen ji's CDs, you will get to know that it is his tuning, just by listening to the Tanpura. It is not pitch. He cared so much about the Tanpura. For him, the Tanpura had to be played clearly. He wouldn't like it if we played it softly. On stage, when he was going to sing Sa he would just look at us and we had to sing Sa. We would know when he will enter and at that time we would stop. On the stage, we had three times the responsibility which we had in his room or at his residence. We would guess which raga, which bandish or which taala he would sing most of the times correctly. Ninety percent of the times, Guruji has sung the same raga and taala that we guessed. Such is a Guru and disciple's relationship. If Guruji came to Bangalore, my soul, mind and intellect would be with him. Whenever he came, they used to let me off at office. Even at home, they knew that I will come only after sending him off at the airport. I would do all that because I used to learn many things, without any dialogue, just by being in his presence.

Once Guruji starts singing and reaches a particular level no one could sing in between. We would sing Shadja and Pancham for a little while than singing the upper octave Shadja. In my 25- 30 years of experience with him, he has never told me that I sang more. Instead he would ask us to sing more.

About thirty years back, during a music festival held at Chowdiah Memorial hall, Guruji's and my music concerts were organized. Bhimsen ji's program was a day before than mine. The organizer came to me and told "Bhimsen ji is coming. Please take care of him,

Torviji". I said "he is my Guru, I will always take care of him, Sir". But, he told me one more thing. He said, "we are presenting you as an independent artiste. So, this time please don't sit behind Bhimsen Joshi ji for Tanpura support. The next day is your program". I told, "It is impossible. I cannot lose such an opportunity for the sake of my program. Sitting behind Guruji, playing the Tanpura and singing 'Sa' is such a good fortune and such a responsible job. You will not understand it. I am small, it is my music, don't worry. It is okay even if only ten people attend my program". Then he once again asked me to accept it for only once, that time. It was a bad time for me. I said "okay" and went to meet Guruji who had come. I was wondering how to tell Guruji that I couldn't accompany him on the Tanpura. I had already made a promise to the organizer. I said "Guruji, tomorrow I have office, I will have to go". He said "Your office ends at five, right? The program is at six". I told "There is an urgent meeting tomorrow". I lied to him. He asked "Then what about the Tanpura?". I said "I will send my student, Deekshit". He asked "Does he play the Tanpura?". I said "He plays and also sings" and Guruji agreed. I couldn't sleep that day. I had lied to my Guru. After I came back home, I cried thinking that I had done a big mistake. My office got over at five on the program day. The program was at six in Chowdaiah hall and I was sitting at home. My wife Pramila asked "Today is your Guruji's program. Then why are you sitting here?". I replied "I have to sing tomorrow morning so I am leaving a little late". I had to just kill time for half an hour; not to go to Guruji's program early. If I go there I will have to play the Tanpura. Then I went to the program along with my wife. The program started a little late at 6:30. I went inside around 7:20. Madhav gudi was sitting for one tanpura and Deekshith for the other. I was regretting for my deed out of shame. I had repented so much. As soon as I went inside, Madhav Gudi ji saw me. I thought of sitting at the back. But, I was made to sit in the first row since I was singing the next day. In the meantime, Madhav Gudi ji told Guruji that I had arrived there. Immediately Guruji called me from the stage "where are you, Torvi ji? Come here", in that fully

packed hall. He had forgiven such a big mistake of mine. I was so happy when a person of such a great stature called me 'Torviji'. It was an unforgettable moment of my life. I made my wife sit in the front row as I went up to the stage, there was a huge applause. That program was wonderful. He sang Shuddh Kalyan. Later when he started singing, he gestured me to sing. I got maximum scope to sing that day. There was applause when I sang. Then, in the morning with Guruji's blessings, I sang Miya Ki Todi and Deshkar. The program went well. B V K Shastri, a great music critic of Prajavani, listened to my program and wrote in the newspaper the next day that 'Like Guru, Like Disciple'. 'After Bhimsen Joshiji's music, no other music is amusing. Even singing is difficult. But his able student, Vinayak Torvi, sang wonderfully' he further wrote.

I was feeling guilty of doing such a terrible mistake. But, he forgave my mistake and blessed me. He had so much affection and trust towards me. I would say no student should do this mistake. Don't lie to your Guru. While giving music, he opens up his inner self. He sees himself in his students hoping for another Torvi or another Bhimsen Joshi. That's why I tell to all my students 'how much ever difficult the situation might be, never lie to your Guru. Don't do injustice to your Guru. I would like to give a suggestion to today's students that even if you don't like Guruji's particular nature or some arrangement at his house directly or indirectly, you should never think about it. Your relation is with music alone. Think only about it'. If Guruji is worried even a little bit, it affects our music. Gururao Deshpande ji could have gone to Manji Khan Saheb to learn music. But, he was thoughtful that he thought Vaze Bua was aged; if he leaves then it will be a betrayal. So he did not go. You may find it difficult to do all Guru's seva or to give how much ever money he demands, but mentally you should be positive.

I have attended many concerts of Bhimsen Joshi ji. Irrespective of the place, his food and attire were very simple. I have neither seen him wearing a jazzy outfit nor using a perfume. He always wore white

or silk coloured shirts and a simple pyjama. He was very simple even with respect to his food habits. He always preferred to have chapathi, Bhakri, Rice and Saru (Rasam). He never ate extra. And he used to consume very less on the days when he had programs. He used to tell “if you have your stomach only 25% full, you can sing with a strong voice. But there should be enough food so that you don’t get hungry while singing”. Recollecting about the food pattern, I remember one of his programs organized in Bangalore. Everytime he came to Bangalore, he would stay in Hotel Woodlands. But that day, the organizer had booked him a room in Chalukya Hotel. I took him there. The program got over. Every time, my duty was to go to the receptionist before going to the program and order food for us and the accompanying artistes. But this time out of some hurry I forgot to order before going to the program. After giving all the signatures and autographs at the end of the program, it was 10:30 pm when we returned to our room. At that time, when I went to order food, they said that South Indian meals were closed. I became nervous; I had never seen Guruji having a North Indian meal. I told Guruji “Guruji, only North Indian is there”. I fell at his feet and apologized for not ordering it before the program. He said “Ok then, order something, anything is fine. Sometimes it happens”. The waiter came and initially said that there were three rotis, curry, but no rice; later he came and said that there were only two rotis and said “there are only two rotis; no curry or rice. If you want I can give you Dal”. Imagine how the situation would have been for me. So, I told Vaini “Please come to my house. I will ask my wife to cook something. When I told this to Guruji, he said “what will you do at this time? Your wife is from Gadag, I have seen her since her earlier days. Her house was beside my house. Don’t give trouble to our people. I insisted telling ‘it’s still eleven o’clock’. Then even Vaini told “since they are calling us, let’s go”. Then I called my wife and said “I am coming home along with Guruji. Cook whatever is possible for you”. My wife liked Guruji and his music very much. She had served even Guruji (Gururao ji) who had stayed in our house for months. She had faith

towards Bhimsen ji the same way she had towards Gururao ji. She said “Don’t worry, I will do something”.

At that time, I owned a Fiat Padmini car. I brought them to my house in my car. Vaini sat behind and Guruji sat in the front. My hands were shivering. He said “You drive well, hold the steering more tightly; have control on it”. And asked “is this a second-hand vehicle?”. I said “Yes, Guruji”. Then he told “Even if it is second hand, it is in good condition. It might have run 28 to 30 thousand kilometres”. When he said that, I looked at the meter and it showed 29,000 kilometres. He was very fond of cars. He used to remove the spare parts and fix it. Many a times when I went to his house, I have seen him under the car, repairing it. He had Mercedes white car. Even in terms of driving, if he left Pune in the morning, he would reach Dharwad by five in the evening and Kundagol by eight. He would take a bath and chat with his friends, sing Todi in the morning, and then start back to Pune by ten and reach by five. Such was his driving.

We reached home. By that time my wife had cleaned the house and kept it ready. Half of the cooking was over. I asked Guruji “Shall we have Dinner now?”. He said “let some time pass”. Then he drank half a cup of tea. Vaini slept on the Sofa itself. I told Guruji that I will arrange a bed for him. But he asked for a mat and a pillow. Then I gave him a mat and a pillow. I said “Guruji, I will play my father’s keertan”. He said “We were the ones who listened to his keertans”. Then he slept while listening to Damaji Pant Akhyana. Even his wife slept. We got half an hour to get things ready. By the time I arranged the dining table for dinner, they woke up, freshened up and told “Dining table! No need of dining table, I will sit down and have my dinner”. So, he had his dinner sitting down. My wife had prepared a festive feast. That day, you will not believe me, it was 12:30 am when she served the dinner. By the time we slowly had the dinner, it was 1:30 am. Coincidentally, it was February 4th, Bhimsen ji’s birthday. Then my children Veena, Vani and Pallu (Pallavi) got ready. Then we all made Guruji sit down, gave him a small gift and celebrated his birthday till

3:30 am. After that, I dropped them at Chalukya hotel, then again went there at 8.00 am to pick them up and dropped them at the airport.

He used to visit our house every time he came to Bangalore. We were more fortunate to have him frequently visit us at our house. He has also blessed my grandson. Bhimsen ji used to touch my father's feet and prostrate. Whenever I went to Pune, he would ask how my father and mother were. Bhimsen ji's personality was ideal. From which perspective should I see him? his music or his personality? He was as innocent as a small child. In Sawai Gandharva festival, he used to sit and listen to even a twenty year old boy's program. Even if he himself was as great as the Mount Everest, he never presented himself as a great person or his music alone as the greatest. Such was the heart of Guruji. I got to learn many things by going along with him on concert-tours for twenty years.

He was thoughtful in his singing style, in the way of choosing the raga, the way of singing one raga while ascending and another raga while descending with Khatka, in choosing which combination of ragas will be good, what to sing first and what next, how long it should be, how the matching contrast should be, etc. He was a highly genius person. I have attended many of his concerts. He might have sung for one hour or sung just an abhang or bhakti geet, the standard of his music was very high always. He used to sing Thumri, Teertha Vittala, Hari Bhajane Mado Nirantara, Jo bhaje hari ko sadaa, and so on. In every concert, I observed every aspect of his music, including his posture, hand gestures, his style of singing the notes, his ideas and the gap he would leave between alap sections or in the middle of taans. I used to observe how he connected to the audience, how his interaction was with the listeners. Today, if my concert goes on well and someone enjoys it, then I give all the credit to my Guruji Pandit Bhimsen Joshi ji.

Dattatreya : *Guruji, in your musical journey, you have narrated your discipleship under great artistes like Gayanacharya Gururao Deshpande*

ji and Pandit Bhimsen Joshiji. With their training, you have been singing here and also abroad for the past 35-36 years. How did you develop your music? What is the objective of your music?

Guruji : As I got older, as maturity set in, I got the association of various great musicians. My music has kept on changing. As a young child, I used to sing with my father for keertans. It might be Hanuman praising lord Rama, or Chidambar Mahaswami ji's Abhangs composed by Rajaram Maharaja, what was important was that, we used to sing according to the situation. When I was young, I used to think that if the raga and the lyrics match then it can bring out emotions in both the singer and the listener. If we start singing mechanically, simply because there is lyrics, tala and laya, it is not enough. We should not only show our mastery and finish the concert but, we should also understand our music, blend our emotions with it and share it with our audience. At last, whether it is praising God or singing Miya Malhar's one badath alap, taan or Layakari, the objective of my singing and their listening should be the same.

That is the reason why we singers and the listeners don't get weary even after singing for four hours. The important reason for this is the involvement. So, when I was singing keertans, I used to sing with great involvement. This reflected in my classical music too. In 'Bhoop' there is a 'raga bhava'. There is asthayi, antra, vadi and samvadi. But where is Rasa in it? Some musicians claim that there is rasa only in the ragas which have komal notes in them. But we search for rasa even in ragas like Deshkar, Bhoop and Yaman. Only a music that is full of Bhava, rasa and vidwath can be impressive. Scholars, who are well-versed with the theory, can recognize and appreciate our capacity to sing tough taans and khatka murki, or the ease with which we sing two and a half octaves; or our versatility to sing all types of taans, or even the complexity of notations we present in our layakari. Being singers, they see from the perspective of shastra. But, common music listeners listen for the sake of joy. Manifestation of that joy is the objective of my music.

Dattatreya : *That means you don't sing only for the sake of listeners.*

Guruji : Yes... I don't sing like that. Our famous theatre artiste Master Hirannayya used to say "Artistes are misers. The artistes will not let the audience get that joy until they themselves experience that joy". How can someone share something without him having it? That's why, an artiste gets satisfied as he sings, and then shares it with whoever comes with him. Therefore, it might be a big program or a small program; a well-paying program or a seva program, once the Tanpura and the Tabla start after sitting on the stage, no thoughts like this should arise in his mind. I have observed it in Bhimsen Joshi ji. Many a times, I myself have fixed the remuneration for him. Even if they gave ten thousand or one lakh or even if it was just a seva, he sang with same amount of enthusiasm and quality. For him, there was no relation between the quality of the program and the remuneration or the audience strength. He never sang with the objective of entertaining someone, or getting praised, or receiving awards or appearing on TV and newspapers. After the introduction, once he sat on the stage and once the tanpura sound started, he had no thoughts other than music. How powerful must an artist be to maintain such an order? In ancient times, great saints, Rishi-Munis used to go to the forest in search of a calm place to do tapas. It can't be like that for an artiste. He should be amongst artists and music lovers. Even if there are restrictions, in terms of time, he should sing with the feeling that it is for him, it is for his upliftment. It is a Gurukanika (An offering to the Guru). When Bhimsen Joshi ji was alive and resided in Pune, I used to think that he will not come and listen to me and so, would take his name and sing. But after his demise, he is everywhere in sookshma roopa. So, my responsibility has increased. He is here now, Bhimsen Ji and Gururao ji are sitting here, observing my music. This is the worship we do to them. Therefore, Guru's presence is everywhere.

Dattatreya : *Music and Spirituality are very close to each other. If we observe your life, we can see that relation. The reason for that might be*

your father's Kathakeertan or the Chidambar Mahaswami utsav. That bhava can be seen in your music. Please elaborate.

Guruji : It might be Harikatha or Classical music or Light music, there is swara, tune, bhava and literature in each of them. If you compose it well and enjoy it while singing, then it becomes adhyatma. Spirituality means studying one thing very deeply, knowing its truth, giving it novelty and then improving it. That can be seen in music.

Some people become emotional when we say Ramakrishna, Vittala, Chidambara, Vasudev, Narayana. We become emotional as soon as Gandhar is sung. For us Gandhar can be Rama. Pancham can be Chidambar Mahaswami. Some people feel God and have his glimpse. In the same way, we feel the notes and sing by visualizing them. Some people call this as Spirituality. Some spiritualists don't keep any photo of God, there is no abhisheka or mantra but only 'namasmarana', 'japa' and 'tapashcharya'. What is Music? Music is a 'tapashcharya'. If we have to sing Multani, we try to know where Multani is. Can we feel its fragrance? Can we touch it? Or can we see it? Music is Nirguna. We make that nirguna music, saguna and then present it to the people. We give it a form. We sing Raganga. We attach alaap and taans to it. Spirituality and Music are just two sides of the same coin. Spirituality is not different from Music. Music is known as the fifth Veda. It was not an entertainment as it is now. Nowadays, since money and fame are earned through Music, people think that music is for that purpose alone. Instead of improving their music, they consider it as a business. It is never a business. If your music is good then Lakshmi and Saraswati will come along with you. The important thing in music is sacrifice. Spirituality tells the same thing. Because, you sacrifice yourself, become a good artiste, you will not be able to give time to your spouse and children. Whether he gets something to eat or not, the artiste goes on practicing. He will not keep much relation between his music and body. The inner self or the subtle body will have the sangeeta samskara. Body is a medium through which we sing. Therefore, sacrifice is very important in music. I remember a shloka

of Shivashastri. Shivashastri was a great scholar, a poet and a great disciple of Chidambara Mahaswami, from Andhra. He said “Ayushyamarogyamudara saukhyam”. Give me more lifetime, give me health; don’t give me half lifetime, sickness, poverty and ruined house because I am a devotee. As a god’s devotee or as a musician, I ask the God to give me everything that is good; give me wealth, good health, a big bungalow, car and foreign tours. In my life time, “saukhyam suputra kulabhivruddhim” give me children, grandchildren. Don’t leave anything, give me everything like the common people. Give everything but along with it give me ‘virakti buddhi’ (sense of detachment) towards it. The objective of our music is music itself.

Dattatreya : *Your musical education happened under different Gharanas of distinctive features. When you started singing, you analysed each raga. You give each raga a distinctive structure. How is that possible?*

Guruji : In my life, I was extremely fortunate to learn music from various stalwarts. It might be Gururao Deshpande ji or Pandit Bhimsen Joshi ji, they were a huge treasure that I found in my middle age. At the University, I got Mansur ji, Gangubai ji and Rajguru ji. So, my music is quite complicated. When I went to Mansur ji, I used to think ‘Why is his music like this? What is his approach towards taans and layakari? What is his style of singing notes? I would observe all the attributes of good music, that can be listed, while he sang Nayaki Kanada or Sampoorana Malkouns or Basanti Kedar. But I never asked him anything. I would observe, in Jaipur Gharana, the way they sing the asthayi and antra twice; the way they sing predominantly in Madhya laya. The tempo they adopted is very suitable for their style. That style was so apt for Mansur ji, as if that tempo was made for his music. I have even thought about how his music would be, if sung in only Ektaal. In his singing style, no matter which tempo, the division of four beats which is there in Teental, is often reflected. And while singing taans, he used to take help of the segments very well. While teaching or while singing taans, he never used gamaka. It was like a pearl necklace. I have tried to sing whatever I got from Mansurji.

Gangubai ji sang very less of layakari and notation. What a voice it was! What was there in her music? It is the weightage given to each note. What else do you want in Gangubai ji’s music? She might have not sung taans and layakari in different taals. But what she sang is more than enough for us. In Kirana Gharana, it might be Bhimsen Joshi ji or Gangubai ji, their singing was imbued with laya. They didn’t give that subtle dhakka for every beat while doing alaap or Layakari. Every alaap, every note in their music is rhythmic but we can’t see the Laya. All this can be seen in my music. This is not a patchwork or imitation but a thoughtful arrangement. It is an outcome of influence of every bit of music I have learnt from all these luminaries.

Dattatreya : *According to you, what should be the difference in the presentation of Raga Miya Malhar and Raga Chayanat?*

Guruji : It is difficult to sing all the ragas of all the Gharanas. But, for the one who is trained in Gwalior Gharana, it is easy to sing ragas of other Gharanas. The voice culture that they have, helps them sing all the ragas. That is why, if we keep Gwalior as our base then we can turn to Jaipur, Agra, or Kirana. But, it is difficult to turn to Gwalior from Jaipur or Kirana Gharana. I can tell this with my experience. It is not impossible but quite difficult. Listen to Gwalior Gharana’s Paluskar ji’s music. He has sung wonderfully in just three minutes. However difficult the raga might be or if it is an uttaranga Pradhan raga, there is a preparation to sing it beautifully in Gwalior Gharana’s training. So, for the ones who have Gwalior Gharana’s foundation, it is easy to adopt other music or Gharana. I had the foundation of Gwalior Gharana from Gururao ji. So, when I joined under Bhimsen Joshi ji, I observed the volume, his presence of mind, the variety of taans, the gaps he gave in between, etc. I tried to apply it to my music. I have practiced it for ten years. It doesn’t come just like that. To imbibe the music of Gururao Deshpande ji, Bhimsen Joshi ji and few other people, it took ten long years to sink into my mind, heart and blood to emerge as Vinayak Torvi’s music. That’s why I can sing it easily now. Day before yesterday, in Satara, when I sang a Kirana

Gharana raag, the audience went crazy out of happiness. Usually what I do is, after singing Miya Malhar, immediately I sing Gwalior Gharana ragas like Kedar or Hamir or Kamod. Then suddenly we can sing Jaijivanti. Singers of Agra Gharana have mastered it. While singing Agra, I never recall Agra artistes. I don't recall Guruji while singing. I don't sing keeping his music in front. First of all, we should forget our Guruji when we sit on stage. We should recall Guruji from heart. But, while singing we should always keep in our mind that "I am the singer. I will sing responsibly". If you really recall Guruji from your heart, his blessings will always be there. So, today if I sing Miya Malhar or Yaman which are Kirana Gharana ragas, Bhimsen Joshi ji's music can be observed; and then suddenly if I sing Kamod, which is a Gwalior Gharana raga, Gururao ji's music becomes evident. If I have to sing Jaijivanti or Basant it will be completely adhering to the style of Agra Gharana. That is the Samskar we had. Once, in Sajjan Ghad of Samarth Ramadas, after I sang Miya Malhar, an 85-year-old man hugged me tightly and said to the people, "Pandit Bhimsen Joshiji has not left us, he has just left his body. His address has changed. Now, he is not in Pune, but in Manjunatha nagar of Bangalore. He is in Torvi ji's voice. He is in his heart". Bhimsen Ji had sung several times in that hall and that old man had listened to his music. People gave feedback such as "I have heard Gururao ji, you sing exactly like him". Hearing all this, I don't feel proud, but feel that I am on the right path. I have taken only those portions that can be taken from a Gharana. I cannot sing completely like Jaipur or Agra Gharana. I have inculcated that style into my music according to its suitability. One should not feel that it is an imitation, but should consider it as an independent and an influenced style. Finally, it should become Vinayak Torvi's music.

As personality differs with each and every individual, there is a personality to each Raga too. The way how some people are short, some are obese and some are tall, features vary between Ragas too. Whenever we sing a raga, we observe its nature. When we listen to Kedar, we see how it is sung in Agra Gharana, Jaipur Gharana or in Kirana

Gharana. And since you are also a vocalist, you will know which approach suits best for a raga. It will not make sense if you sing Kedar, Shankara or Kamod for too long. They are not the ragas which can be sung for an hour. So, one should practice a raga only after knowing its nature, specialities of related gharanas, where its alaap, taans and Layakari lie, only then you can learn music of all Gharanas. What is a gharana? The one who is the progenitor of a gharana will have a particular voice and he will develop it. From him a gharana starts growing.

Music is an expression of our feelings through notes. Music refers to a good mix of swar, tala and laya. It is a good mix which gives a soothing effect of both emotion and knowledge. Getting all of this at one place is called Music.

Dattatreya : *What is your suggestion to a student who has come to learn Classical Music seriously?*

Guruji : What word did you use for learning classical music? Students who want to learn seriously. Mere seriousness is not enough. As I have said earlier, he should innately have the 'Sangeet samskar'. Then, if he wants to be a vocalist, he must be blessed with a good voice or average good voice, instead of saying excellent, let us call it 'good voice'. Some have good voice by birth itself. Some might need to do a little saadhana to acquire it. One can also improve his/her voice for classical music solely through sadhana. So whoever is born with a good voice needs the blessings of a good teacher. What does it mean by a 'good Guru? How should I teach him if a student comes to me and says that he doesn't have swar jnana or laya jnana. As he progresses level by level, he should get a Guru accordingly. That is why, when we were small, we learnt in a pathashala. Learning there, we passed exams, learnt to sing swar geet, lakshan geet in madhyalaya and then in vilambit. Which means, initially one might not get a great Guru; but, it is enough if one's teacher understands what real music is. Later that teacher himself will tell "Look, I have this much knowledge; There is a great music Guru in the neighbouring village, he sings

and teaches better than me. I can see the potential of a great singer in you, so, I will enrol you there". The teacher should tell this, students themselves should not decide this. Then, the student should learn attentively for ten to twelve years under that Guru. At 15-16 years, when there is a natural change of voice in boys, they should have a good teacher who is knowledgeable and a performer. The teacher should know the technique of teaching the boys of that age. If the student learns for 8-10 years under the guidance of his Guru with devotion, dedication and perseverance, he will become a great musician. Under the guidance of Guru, we should get to know how much practice we should do when we are 10 years old, when we are 20 years old, or 30, 50 or 60 years old, and so on. There is no end for practice. It ends only with us, at the end of our life. Till the end, everyone is a student of music; a servant of music. Some artistes who sing well are called Pandits and are felicitated with awards. But the artiste knows, to what extent he is a Pandit, as Bendreji says "kalkot kalkot hodhange vidya ulkot ulkot hogtada" (As you go on learning you will find there is much more to it). There is no end to it. That hunger for music should never reduce. If not then why did Bhimsen ji need the 'barasarasati samagata' bandish of Gururao ji in his 70's. He has been awarded with several awards; an internationally renowned artiste. But still why did he need to learn that bandish?

Once, when Bhimsen ji had fallen ill, I visited him in Pune. No one was allowed to enter the hospital, but they allowed me after knowing that I was his student. Going inside I bowed to him and asked "Guruji, how are you?". "I'm recovering" he replied in a low voice. He was in the ICU unit. There, in one corner, two CD's were being played, one of Abdul Kareem Khan Saheb and another of Bal Gandhar ji. That time I thought, even in the ICU, music is going on for 24 hours. He who was awarded with Bharathratna is already 81-82 years old and his hunger for music has not reduced at all. I kept his hand on my head and asked him "please bless me so that even I retain the hunger for music till the end". It should not stop at any point. And if a young artiste sings well, he should listen to everybody's music. It

could be someone of his age, younger or elder. Because, this is a Shravana Vidya. The more and more you listen, the more and more your music will grow. It is not necessary to take everything or learn every style, but you should go on adding elements that suits your music the same way how the application of copper to gold hardens the metal. You can analyse the ragas, notes, tempo, laya, the singing style or the pronunciation, etc., of other gharanas. Likewise, without listening to many people you cannot develop as a good musician. Nowadays, if there is a concert, there will be some artistes who are about to sing next or who have already sung. What many of us do is, we go there, sing for 1 or 2 hours, come back to hotel and sit watching the TV, while the all-night program is still going on. This should not happen. Even if we cannot listen to everybody, we should at least sit there for some time, and listen to what they are singing. If he sings better than you, then you are learning something there and if he is not that good, then you can think of how he should have sung and, through which you can learn.

Dattatreya : *Back then, there was Gurukula system. In your perspective, what is Gurukula? What difference do you find between the Gurukula system in which you learnt and the present teaching system?*

Guruji : Guru not only imparts knowledge but also guides the pupil for his overall development and for that, Guru's association is very much required. Gurukula means being in the association of Guru. Earlier, everything was there in the Gurukula. It was not only spirituality and music, but everything.

There has been a change in today's Gurukula system. There is no need to stay in Guru's house. We should obey our Guru. One should not resort to overpractice. Common sense is very important. He may have knowledge, confidence and get good audience, but if that artiste doesn't have common sense, then it is very difficult. Wisdom and common sense should go hand in hand. We get to learn everything in Guruji's house. We had to obey and follow Guruji's instructions even in his absence. If you stick to be the way how Guruji asks

you to be, then it hardly matters. Altogether, Gurukula means being in the presence of Guru. Unlike Gurukulas of those days, this cannot happen in today's diluted Gurukulas. Today, in this electronic era, with Facebook, email, whatsapp, message, telephone, the scope of music has widened. But one cannot appreciate its depth. Nowadays, if the student cannot understand a word in the bandish or has forgotten the notation of the bandish, he will call his Guruji and ask to sing that part. The Guru will sing and thereby the student will learn. There is nothing wrong in it. Many people from America ask me to take class through Skype.

Dattatreya : *Fifteen to twenty students of yours, sing and perform, hundreds of students are learning under them. Please tell something about them.*

Guruji : I have put my ideas into what I learnt from both the Gurujis and have been teaching the same to my students. Amruta Deshpande, Upendra Deekshith, Kishor Desai, Nirmala, Shrinath, Chitra, Mukund, Dhananjay Hedge, Dattu, Keerti, Shruti, Lakshmakka, Siddharth, Reena Basu, Saket, Gayathri, Kasturi are all my students. These 15-20 able students have around 30-40 students each. Now, if we organize an all-night festival with just students or grand students as performers, we might have to organize for ten days; that many students are there. One thing that I am happy about is that, all my students have passed on Gururao Deshpande ji's, Bhimsenji's and my music to their students thereby continuing the legacy. A Guru-shishya legacy should continue and here it is continuing.

Dattatreya : *When you were telling about Gururao Deshpande ji, you told that you were lucky, notably because he taught you a combination of Gwalior, Agra and Jaipur Gharanas. And when it comes to us, we are luckier, because there is mix of Kirana Gharana also in it. You have analysed it thoroughly. So, in my opinion, we have got it ready-made.*

Guruji : Since my music cannot be put into the framework of one Gharana, it becomes hard to learn for the students. So if one learns

music from me then he/she needs to learn for minimum 10-15 years from me. Otherwise it is tough. It will be confusing for him/her. They tell "yesterday he sang Miya Ki Todi just like Bhimsen Joshi ji, while singing Chayanat his voice turns so well and he sings Multani in the same way how the Agra Gharana artistes people sing it". In this manner, I have adopted and incorporated the special qualities of different Gharanas while singing different Ragas. That is why I teach Raag Kamod after teaching Todi to my students. The voice will not adapt easily, but that first should come. The voice will become as flexible, as it should be. His voice should be able to sing any raga melodiously. Therefore one cannot learn for only one or two years from me. It is true that my music is readymade but it takes time to learn it. Maturity is needed. Initially I teach Yaman and Bhoop. But, I teach Marwa after ten years of learning. Why shouldn't I teach Marwa when there are only five or six notes in it? It is because there is a maturity to ragas too, the same way how we develop maturity in our lives with age. Which raga should be taught to whom and when, depends on the personality, depends on the voice, and the little knowledge of music that the student has. The Guru should decide which raga to teach according to the students, as some ragas come easily to some students. One should teach music according to the student's and the raga's nature.

Dattatreya : *You were an officer and later also became the manger in the bank for thirty years. You were balancing music along with it. There are very few artistes who have balanced like this. How was it possible for you?*

Guruji : A person might be a musician; might work in any office, but, the sense of responsibility is essential to him. If someone thinks, 'I am the only son; my father has made so much wealth' and travels two days to Mumbai, two days to Kolkata like a bird without learning music responsibly, then music will not come to him. I have always prioritized my family, brothers and sisters, followed by my wife and children. In a job, there is discipline, there are rules and regula-

tions, and there is responsibility. There is time management. Life will be very difficult for the one who doesn't know time management. I used to wake up by 4:00 am in the morning and practice till 7:30 am then have some tea and have breakfast. Sometimes, I used to have classes and by around 9:30 - 10:00 am I used to leave for work. Then at 5:30-6:00 pm, after coming back home, I used to have tea and poha. Then, from 7:00 pm till 11:00 pm, I used to practice. I was practicing for six to seven hours along with the bank job. As I was working at the bank, a family approached me to get their daughter married to me. I got married. All my three children are highly educated, they have done their post-graduation. The elder one, Veena, has done her Masters in computer science, the second one, Vanishri, did MBA and the third one, Shruti, whom we call Pallavi at home, has done M.Sc in Microbiology. My wife likes film music. Coincidentally, as her house was beside my house, she started coming for bhajans to my house. That is when she got to know that there is a type of music other than film music. She used to listen to Hindustani classical music. Listening to my music, later she started listening to all types of music, after we came to Bangalore. Many musicians used to come to my house. So, my wife acquired a great amount of 'Sangeet Samskara'. I had to practice and go for job. At all those times she used to look after the house and family. In my residence, I was like a son, I hardly did anything for my wife. She had to do everything. So she had taken the responsibility of the entire family. She was careful enough so that nothing disrespectful happens to her husband and his music remains safe. She would consider my students as her children and my Guruji as her Guruji. Students used to go directly to the kitchen asking for something to eat or to have some tea and she has never let someone go without having something. Even if she didn't know to sing herself, she was a good poet. She has written a beautiful poem on Gururao Deshpande ji. We have put it in our Sabha's souvenir. In this way, she has done Guruji's seva; Narayana Mujumdar ji's seva and Bhimsen Ji's seva. From Gururao ji, I learnt music, but she was the one who did the seva. So today, if I have reached a level in music, my wife, Pramila, has played a great part in it.

If a person has to become an artiste, he needs the support of his father-mother; brothers and sisters; wife, children and his friends. Many of my friends, it might be Meharvade or Vajapeyi or Shivanath Kavudi; all of them encouraged me a lot. There is also a great contribution of my students. Importantly, the main reason for my good singing is my students. Because I was learning while teaching. While teaching, your creativity should always be alert. You should feel 'how much music is still there to learn!' I have grown this much by teaching my students. If you sing now, raag 'Deshkar', which you have learnt six months back, you will find it new. Come and learn whatever you have already learnt. Then you will exclaim 'still so much is there Guruji!'. My mental practice of music goes on for 24 hours.

Dattatreya : *Guruji, you said mental practice of music. Please tell something about it.*

Guruji : Mental practice means, sitting and singing in mind, for example, Yaman; it's alap without using voice, and then you will start hearing your music. God has given so much knowledge to us, try it once. There is no need to sing the music with the Tanpura. Just start singing Kamod inside your mind. Music is not merely the sound of the voice. It is something which comes from within; which comes from the brain. They tell, you should sing and memorise that, which means start thinking. The music within, doesn't need voice. That is why, I feel surprised when some people say that they have stopped singing because they don't get programs. What is the relation between not getting programs and giving up music practice? Music is knowledge. Perform only if you can or else sing at home. Don't you eat or sleep at home? Then why don't you sing? Music should be a daily chore. You have lunch every day; do you have the same dish every day? Like how on one day you have North Indian meal, on another day, South Indian or Mexican, you should develop new ideas in your music every day. It shouldn't be stagnant. If you cannot do that, then ask someone. You should learn and develop your music by listening, singing and by thinking. To facilitate that, mental practice is a must.

Think about a raga the same way as how you think about God; Do you need a stage to remember God? Learning music is not a mere collection of information. If one has that knowledge, then he moves to another level. Therefore, mental practice is very much important.

I have answered all the questions asked by you. This is only my experience and my opinion. If I have committed any mistake somewhere while mentioning about Gharana or my Gurus, it is not the fault of people mentioned there but only Vinayak Torvi's fault. I pray to Chidambara Mahaswami, Chandrala Parameshwari, Guru Raghavendra Swami, both my Gurus and music lovers that let God's blessings be upon all of us.