

and accompanists at the railway station, offer best possible hospitality and would escort them to the conference hall and back. Young Sheela met Ustad Bade Gulam Ali Khan, Ustad Faiyaz Khan, Smt. Kesarbai Kerkar, Pandit D. V. Paluskar and Ustad Ahmad Jan Tirakhawa. There are several sweet memories and anecdotes described in these essays.

Around 1940, Ustad Bundu Khan used to live in Delhi. He used to visit their house every Sunday afternoon and play his sarangi for one hour in a small room assigned to him. His audience used to vary from one to many listeners of all age groups. One Sunday, as there was no one in the room, he went out into the garden, rolled on flower beds with his sarangi and played raga Bahar to the flowers as it was a basant ritu. Surshree Smt. Kesarbai Kerkar used to perform in annual Harivallabh sangeet mela at Jalandhar. On her way to Jalandhar and back she used to stay in Delhi with Mathur family for couple of weeks and it used to be the golden period of musical feast. When in mood, she would sing classical, light and bhajans to the household audience and friends. With great persuasion, she agreed to teach couple of items to twelve years old young Sheela. However, at the assigned time, attraction of sixth round of Walt Disney's film 'Snow white and seven dwarfs' proved to be dominant. Her father felt very bad and in later years singer Sheela realized what opportunity she had lost. Kesarbai used to describe Hari Vallabh mela with great details. Sheelaji never imagined that after few years, she also would be invited to sing in this mela. She has written about that great experience in one long essay. In the same mela, Pt. Bhimsen Joshi was also invited as he was the 'star' attraction in those days. That evening, he was in altogether different world and did not sing except a Marathi Bhajan for few minutes. However, he argued with the organizers that he has already rendered raga Malkauns for over one hour and the audience did not complain. Sheelaji has described whole incidence. It shows the devotion and love of audience to the musician in such a distant place. This is really amazing.

'Gavaiyya so Khavaiyya' [one who sings well eats also well] is a popular saying among the musicians. There are many interesting stories in some of these essays. In an annual concert in Delhi, great Ustad Bade Gulam Ali Khan was put up with one Hindu family that offered vegetarian meals only. Furious Ustadji just made a list of items required and sent his shagird to market. Meanwhile, he himself lit up fire (chulha) in the outhouse of the bungalow. He cooked nice meals. Only after enjoying the 'Bada' and proper khana, Badeji's team moved to the concert venue. Ustadji used to say, "The aroma in our musical notes and gayaki originates from the food that we eat ". Here, we meet Pandit Pran Nath eating one dozen eggs just for the breakfast and Ustad Bundu Khan dipping hot samosa in the sweet cup of tea after his Sunday afternoon solo concerts. Zia Mouniddin Dagar captures the kitchen of the apartment of his student in New York and fills it with the aroma of Indian spices even before imparting first lesson in music. Siddheshwari Devi and Begum Akhtar were the food goddesses. They used to enjoy cooking delicious dishes equally and would enjoy in the company of their fans and family friends.

In her childhood, Sheelaji had listened to records ending with an announcement 'Mera Naam Akhtaribai'. At that time, she had hardly realized that the same Akhtaribai would be instrumental in seeking gurus for her in music. With her efforts, Sheelaji could take proper training of Kirana gharana with the legendary Niyaz and Faiyaz Ahmad Khan. She used to stay for months in Mumbai with her brother during these tuitions. We also come across why Begum Akhtar wanted to learn Sitar from Ustad Vilayat Khan and why it did not materialize. Siddheshwari Devi had only one foreign tour during her lifetime and had to leave it halfway due to the reasons that may appear funny to the present generation. In an essay titled 'Go Lady Go', we encounter with one Maharashtrian singer of 'Gandharva tradition'. He is singing in the farewell ceremony of chief patron of their Delhi based institution, 'Lady Linlithgo', as she was to leave India soon after independence. Great singer has composed a powerful bandish in Raga Adana with words 'Lady lin litha go'. Each time he sang "Go!" quite forcefully while arriving at the sam. Restless lady failed to understand and really got ready to leave. It is really stunning to learn how the singer changed the scene and made lady to stay back using the same words in the bandish and without any interruption in the rendering of raga adana.

In the section, 'The Cooking of music and other essays', Sheelaji gives a brief account of Kirana gharana, some basic thoughts of the idea of raga, modern recording techniques and their effects on the music industry, changes in the attitudes of the musicians and the audience. We come across several personalities and events in this part. Her boss at the publication division Mr. Mohan Rao, a great admirer of Gandhiji, and how he encountered with Sir Richard Attenborough twenty years ago when the later was preparing for his ambitious film 'Gandhi'. In the portrait of 'Baua', we meet her mother and read about her sufferings in a large family. Best essay of over forty pages is – 'Pandit Pran Nath – an Odyssey', with whom she learnt for short time. He was the disciple of Ustad Abdul Wahid Khan. During his stay in Delhi in early seventies, he used to demonstrate slow aalaps of Kirana gharana and would insist that his disciples should also follow. Mr. P. N. Dhar was like son in law to him and Sheelaji as a daughter. After learning that Mr. Dhar shall be on tour to Kashmir, he requests repeatedly for small quantity of saffron for his throat. Mr. Dhar refuses since it was an expensive commodity. Later, Pran Nath moves to USA with the insistence of his disciples who build an empire for him. When Mr. and Mrs. Dhar stay in USA for couple of years on official duty, Pt. Pran Nath organizes several concerts for her daughter Sheelaji and gives a Royal treatment and feast to son-in-law without hinting at the past. He lived over 95 years and spread the Wahid Khan doctrine of Kirana Gharana in USA. Unfortunately very little is known to Indians. However, now lot of information on his work is available on internet.

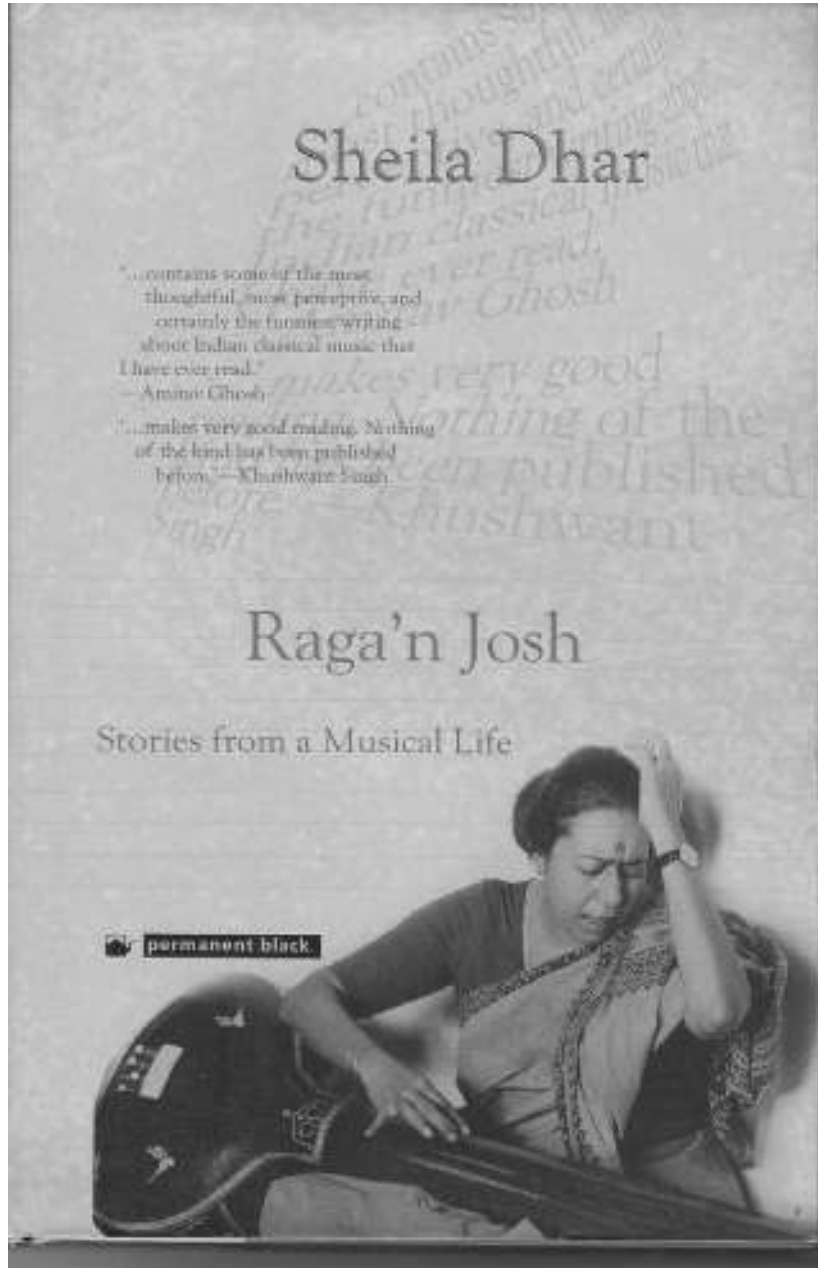
Entire book does not have any picture or photograph. However, Sheelaji's picturesque style has made up for this shortcoming. This is a 'must' for all music

lovers, researchers and students of music. This is because with such books only they will get to know how much 'Josh' is involved in creating the 'Raga'.

Dr. Suresh Chandvankar

Hon. Secretary, 'Society of Indian Record Collectors', Mumbai

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